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PUDUCHERRY POLLS

Modi holds roadshow, boosts NDA campaign

SOUTH » PAGE 5

PLASTIC RULES AMENDED

Compliance eased but targets unchanged

NEWS » PAGE 10

MALDA VIOLENCE

Mastermind held; NIA probes judicial gherao

NEWS » PAGE 8

TRAGIC STAMPEDE

In Nalanda, faith turned fatal

Overcrowding, blocked exits and poor crowd control lead to 9 deaths

GROUND ZERO » PAGE 7

CLINICAL SHOW

Shreyas' Kings ace the chase, climb to the top

SPORT » PAGE 13

NEARBY

State rolls out free reading glasses scheme

BENGALURU
The government has partnered with RestoringVision to roll out a programme aimed at providing free vision screening and reading glasses to citizens aged 40 years and above across the State, beginning with Yadgir district. » PAGE 4

GBA, five corporations unveil logos

BENGALURU
The GBA has unveiled official logos for the authority and the five city corporations on its website. The GBA logo features the image of Kempe Gowda along with the iconic Kempe Gowda tower. » PAGE 2

PROPERTYPLUS » PAGE 15

Russia assures steady oil and LNG supply to India

Russian Deputy Prime Minister Manturov discusses trade, fertilizers, people-to-people ties and connectivity with Modi; Russia cites 'particular attention' paid to cooperation in sectors like oil, gas

Kallol Bhattacherjee
NEW DELHI

Amid the oil shock and supply chain disruptions triggered by the U.S.-Israel war on Iran, Russia has assured that its energy companies have the capacity to "steadily increase" the supply of oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG) to India, and also "continue" to address India's fertilizer needs.

Russian Deputy Prime Minister Denis Manturov, on a two-day visit, called on Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday and discussed the supply of fertilizers.

"We discussed our mutually beneficial cooperation in trade, fertilizers, connectivity and people-to-people ties," said Mr. Modi, who "welcomed sustained efforts from both sides" to realise the agreements of the 23rd India-Russia Annual Summit hosted here in December 2025.

Narendra Modi with Russian Deputy PM Denis Manturov, in New Delhi, on Thursday. ANI

The visit is being seen as part of the preparations by the two sides ahead of the upcoming BRICS summit to be hosted by India and the India-Russia annual summit scheduled in Russia this year. According to the Russian embassy, Mr. Manturov said that Russia has increased supplies of "in-demand mineral fertilizers to India by 40% and is ready to continue meeting India's needs for this product".

He also mentioned that a joint project for the production of carbamide (urea) is "under development". "Particular attention was paid to cooperation in the oil and gas sector. Manturov confirmed that Russian companies have the capacity to steadily increase supplies of oil and liquefied natural gas to the Indian market," said the embassy readout.

CONTINUED ON » PAGE 8

U.S. jet shot down in Iran; 1 rescued

TEHRAN
A U.S. fighter jet was shot down in Iran on Friday and one crew member was rescued, media reports said. The rescue occurred as the U.S. military was conducting a search operation with the support of Israel. » PAGE 12

India-bound oil heads to China?

CHENNAI
Ping Shun, an Iranian crude oil carrier that had been signalling it was heading to India for three days after crossing the Strait of Hormuz, is heading to China as per marine logistics and commodity markets analytics firm Kpler. » PAGE 11

Great Nicobar plan stirs fresh concerns

Abhinay Lakshman
NEW DELHI

A draft plan outlining the "relocation" of Nicobarese tribal communities affected by the Union government's Great Nicobar Island (GNI) mega-infrastructure project "to their ancestral lands" has created confusion and is exacerbating existing apprehensions among locals. They have been, for four years, protesting the clearance for the ₹92,000-crore project after withdrawing their consent in 2022, alleging that their forest rights had not been settled.

This draft "Comprehensive Tribal Welfare Plan", prepared by the Andaman and Nicobar Islands administration and circulated on March 13 for consultation with line departments and the Tribal Council of Great Nicobar, proposes a ₹42.52-crore outlay over 24 months for the "relocation of Nicobarese tribal communities from tsunami-affected or project-impacted areas", which involves housing, land development and basic infrastructure.

The draft was prepared by the Andaman and Nicobar Islands administration. AFP

However, details of where the proposed relocation will take place and who will be relocated have left members of the Tribal Council of Great and Little Nicobar confused, according to Nicobarese community leaders who spoke to *The Hindu*.

CONTINUED ON » PAGE 8

Hit by LPG shortage, auto drivers warn of protest

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Frustrated auto drivers of Bengaluru city, who have been queuing up for LPG for hours in front of bunks, on Friday said that they would launch a protest if the issue was not sorted out by Monday.

The drivers threatened to lay siege to the residence of Food and Civil Supplies Minister K. H. Muniyappa if supply does not improve. Responding to this, Chief Minister Siddarmaiah, underlined that the State government can do little about it, and urged the autorickshaw drivers to direct the protest at the Centre.

The disruption in supply is owing to the ongoing conflict in West Asia, which has affected fuel logistics and availability.

FULL REPORT ON » PAGE 3

Maritime strength

INS Taragiri, a guided-missile stealth frigate, during its commissioning ceremony at the Eastern Naval Command base in Visakhapatnam on Friday. The indigenously built warship marks a boost to India's maritime security and the *Aatmanirbharta* initiative. ANI (REPORT ON PAGE 10)

Third language grading row: Governor asks State government to re-examine decision

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Following a representation by the Association for Preservation of Local Languages, Bengaluru, the Karnataka Governor's office has written to the Chief Secretary to examine the recent decision to award grading to third languages, including Hindi, instead of marking, in SSLC examination.

In his letter to Chief Secretary Shalini Rajneesh, R. Prabhu Shankar, special secretary to Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot, said that the representation submitted recently highlighted "the significant role played by the third language in fostering linguistic diversity, awareness, and intellectual development among students."

Academic importance

"It has been pointed out that the proposed system of awarding only grades, in place of marks, may inadvertently diminish the academic importance of the subject and affect students' motivation to engage seriously with it. The concerns raised also reflect apprehensions among teachers, parents, and educationists regarding the long-term implications of such a policy decision on the overall quality and inclusiveness of school education in the State," the letter said.

Further the letter stated that the Governor had taken note of the issues raised in the representation and desired that the matter be examined comprehensively, keeping in view its academic and administrative aspects across the education sector.

"Therefore, examine the matter in consultation with the Department of School Education and other authorities concerned, and take such action as deemed appropriate in the larger interest of students and the State's educational objectives," he requested.

Recently School Education Minister Madhu Bangarappa announced shifting from marks to grading system for third language in the State.

The decision has received mixed reaction, with some welcoming the move and some others raising objections. The announcement had come even as the SSLC examinations were under way, creating confusion among students. Over 7.5 lakh students have Hindi as their third language, followed by English (32,000) and Kannada (11,400). Urdu, Sanskrit, Tulu, Konkani and Marathi are the other third languages.

Major hurdle for Yettinahole project cleared: MoEFCC gives in-principle approval for diversion of forestland

The Hindu Bureau
SHIVAMOGGA

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), Government of India, has accorded in-principle (stage-1) approval for diversion of 111.02 hectares of forestland in Hassan and Tumakuru districts for the Yettinahole Drinking Water Project, targeted to provide water to drought-prone areas in Karnataka.

In a letter dated April 1, 2026, the Forest Conservation Division of the MoEFCC informed the Additional Chief Secretary (Forest, Ecology and Environment) in Karnataka that the Centre accorded the stage-1 approval under the Van (Samrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Abdhiniyam, 1980, for diverting the land to construct a gravity canal passing through the two districts.

Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar, who holds the portfolio of Water Resources, had met Minister for Environment and Forests Bhupendra Yadav several times to request approval for the proposal.

The MoEFCC has placed certain conditions with regard to compensatory afforestation, online transfer of the Net Present Value (NPV) of the forestland being diverted, settlement of the rights with respect to Scheduled Tribes and traditional forest-dwellers in the forestland, among others.

The Visvesvaraya Jala Nigama Ltd., the project proponent, has to fulfil the conditions and take the working permit to begin the canal work in the forest. A senior official stated that, with the approval, a major hurdle for the project had been cleared. Earlier, the proposal was for the diversion of 173.31 hectares. However, it was revised to 111.02 hectares, due to which the estimation cost of the project went up by ₹425 crore.

The main pump house of Yettinahole Integrated Drinking Water Project at Doddanagara.

"Now, we have to show compliance for the condition and make necessary payments to get the permission to begin the work on the ground. The technical procedures will follow," the official said.

Of the 252-km-long canal, about 208 km has been completed. The work on the 25 km-long is under progress and the work of another 16 kms is yet to begin. "We are seeking cooperation from the departments of Revenue, Home, Forest to continue the civil work," said the official.

The first phase of the work, which includes constructing eight weirs at different locations in Sakleshpur, has been completed. The second phase was stuck due to the delay in getting forest clearance.

As a result, the project implementation agency was forced to divert water to Vani Vilas Sagar in Hiriyur in Chitradurga district. The officials are now hopeful of directing the water to Tumakuru district by October this year.

The project has been designed to ease drinking water woes of nearly 75 lakh people in drought-prone Kolar, Chickballapur, Ramanagara, Tumakuru, Bengaluru Rural, Chikkamagaluru, and Hassan districts.

RELATED REPORT ON » PAGE 4

Karnataka tops under 'Namo Drone Didi Yojana'

Hemanth C.S.
BENGALURU

Karnataka, which is one of the leading aviation hubs in the country, also has the most number of women self-help groups (SHGs) to have undergone training as drone pilots under the 'Namo Drone Didi Yojana' (NDDY).

Under the initiative, 145 members of SHGs from the State have been given drone pilot training which is the highest in the country followed by Uttar Pradesh (128) and Andhra Pradesh (108).

In Karnataka, Koppal district topped the list, with 13 members of SHGs followed by Kalaburagi (12) and Mandya (11).

One of the main objectives of this scheme, apart from empowering the SHGs, is to improve efficiency in agricultural practices and enhance crop yield. The programme's success breaks the stereotype of SHGs being mostly engaged in the making of home-based products such as papads and pickles.

Asha Rani C.S., a resident of Churchugundi in Shikaripur taluk, underwent training in Mysuru in January 2024. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Asha Rani C.S., from Churchugundi village in Shikaripur taluk of Shivamogga district, is among those who underwent this training in Mysuru in January, 2024. For the last two years, she has been operating drone to spray medicines in maize and paddy farms.

"The training is helping me financially too. Under the scheme I got drone as well. In a year for about four to five months, I get work to spray medicine in the farm fields. Sometimes, my earnings go up to ₹1 lakh a month," she said.

CONTINUED ON » PAGE 5

Super sub: India T20I skipper Suryakumar Yadav, front right, sat out an innings before joining the action as an Impact Player in Mumbai Indians' opener against Kolkata Knight Riders. AP

The IPL's Impact Player rule: a disruptor that needs disrupting?

The regulation came under scrutiny during a captains' meeting ahead of the season, with most leaders not in favour of it. While it widens the opportunities for Indian players, it can arrest aspects of their development. And over the long term, it subtly alters the narrative towards favouring specialists and diminishes the all-rounder

K.C. Vijaya Kumar

Team selection in sport is often a balancing act between flair and solidity, individual brilliance and collective effort, and the entire focus is on forging a unit that will triumph. In cricket, with its essential skeleton resting on the twin arms of batting and bowling, the whole exercise of picking a playing eleven is to get the right juxtaposition of these two elements.

The dream is to have enough batting depth, adequate bowling options and also hope that these players will field well. Often, it is fire and ice, salt and pepper, glorious sunshine and sweaters to shield from the cold, rugged beards and clean jawlines, as cricketing outfits are a diverse blend. Maybe these days you can throw in some tattoos as well.

Heady mix

Even the West Indies of the 1980s had this sense of equity. If the battering rams were Gordon Greenidge, Vivian Richards and Clive Lloyd, solidity was lent by Desmond Haynes and Larry Gomes, and the bowling was made in heaven: Andy Roberts, Michael Holding, Joel Garner and Malcolm Marshall.

Interestingly, within these well-demarcated zones of batters and bowlers, there was a demand for this adhesive called all-rounders, so vital in cricket. In Jeff Dujon, the Caribbean men had a brilliant wicketkeeper, who could bat too, and in Gus Logie, they had an outstanding fielder and also a batter.

If they still needed spin, there was always Richards, chewing gum, with efficient off-spin emanating from his right hand. On some days, Roger Harper was picked; he would bowl spin and field well. In cricketing history, most teams that prospered, besides having fine batters and bowlers, always had these dual-skilled all-rounders.

AP

ANI

Twelfth man in: Sarfaraz Khan and Prasidh Krishna have been pressed into service off the bench this season.

The Impact Player substitution becomes an insurance policy that could hinder cricketers from improving their weaker skill

When India won the 1983 World Cup, it was a side that was high on all-rounders starting with the mercurial skipper, Kapil Dev. Mohinder Amarnath could bat and bowl, Roger Binny could bowl and bat, and there were many others on this list. Even wicketkeeper Syed Kirmani had batting credentials.

At times, this yearning for an all-rounder also causes a needless twist, and forces a compromise. When India toured South Africa for the 2003 World Cup, Dinesh Mongia, batter and part-time spinner, was preferred over V.V.S. Laxman. Even if Sourav Ganguly's men made the final before succumbing to Australia, in retrospect Mongia's selection was a flawed move.

But this quest for an ideal playing composition continues with success, and the odd flop. It is in this backdrop that the Indian Premier League (IPL) has proved to be a disruptor, with its Impact Player rule that allows teams to make a substitution during natural breaks in an innings.

Often an extra batter, after he has wielded the willow, is replaced by a bowler, the reverse also happens, all this in a bid to keep the team's balance intact. This is almost like those basement bargain sales, buy jeans and get an extra pair free. It is also a ruse to get more star-value infused into a league that offers an annual summer high equally to fans and marketing executives busy hyping multiple brands.

Introduced in 2023, the Impact Player rule came under scrutiny during a recent captains' meeting ahead of the latest IPL edition. Reportedly, most leaders were not in favour of this 'sporting' legislation. Even if some of the latest games witnessed the Impact Player walking in, ranging from Suryakumar Yadav to Sarfaraz Khan, in the long term it subtly alters the narrative towards favouring specialists in either batting or bowling.

Convenient switch

A unit that feels that it is one batter or bowler short would always employ this switch. And it would mean that the much coveted all-rounder stands diminished. At times, a team that is going through the batting horrors would rather press an extra batter in, as it happened when Chennai Super Kings (CSK) used Sarfaraz against Rajasthan Royals at Guwahati.

One aspect of having an Impact Player is perhaps to stretch the games into last-over humdingers, but there is no guarantee that this will happen. It also helps a franchise to use a legend in his twilight to still turn up for a few overs. This may happen with M.S. Dhoni and CSK, as and when he recovers from his calf-strain.

The beauty of sport is its unpredictability. Captains, coaches and selectors often take a punt, factoring in the opposition, the ground conditions and the weather patterns. Putting out a playing eleven after weighing various options is an exercise largely vested in hope and mildly smudged with the fear, 'what if things go wrong?'.

Cameos in films may work like Suriya's Rolex in the Kamal Haasan starrer *Vikram*, but its equivalent in sport, the Impact Player, seems a greedy thought to infuse more players into cricket's shortest format

But having an Impact Player substitution becomes an insurance policy that could hinder regular players from improving their weaker skill. For instance, seamer Arshdeep Singh should feel the urge to improve as a batter and post handy lower-order runs. A top-order batter equally has to be invested in turning his arm over. But these motivations, both from the individual and team, will shrink once the Impact Player is set in stone.

In these frenzied times of Twenty20s, when a batter can shuffle across and scoop one over fine-leg or reverse-hit past third-man, no captain has the luxury of hiding inept fielders in these positions. Having an Impact Player option would mean a poor fielder can be substituted once his batting stint is over.

Playing the nationalism card that the Impact Player 'has to be an Indian' – unless the team starts with fewer than the maximum allowed quota of four foreigners – does widen the bouquet of opportunities for local players.

Yet, it undermines the highs and lows of sport. A captain getting his unit wrong, or a star player suddenly losing form are inexplicable quirks. A Roberto Baggio can miss a penalty in sport – it happened in the 1994 football World Cup final that swung Brazil's way while the Italian great wilted in despair.

Even though the Impact Player rule will be assessed again in 2027, a rollback would mean that think-tanks would focus on nurturing all-rounders. Wriddhiman Saha, one of India's finest wicketkeepers, lost his Test spot to Rishabh Pant, thanks to the latter's additional skill as a maverick batter.

Age of multi-tasking

Surely, it is not a fair world but in this age of multi-tasking, the conveyor belt of all-rounders cannot be left emasculated. Especially from India where once Sachin Tendulkar, Ganguly, Virender Sehwag and Yuvraj Singh doubled up as effective part-time bowlers, be it as spinners or dibbly-dobblers, and Rahul Dravid kept wickets in ODIs.

Cameos in films may work like Suriya's Rolex in the Kamal Haasan starrer *Vikram*, but its equivalent in sport, the Impact Player, seems a greedy thought to infuse more players into cricket's shortest format. A concussion substitute is essential and has a medical basis, but an Impact Player in the IPL seems like a needless band-aid.

STACKING UP

ATP Men's Top 15

#	Player	Age	Points	Events
1	Carlos Alcaraz	22	13,590	18
2	Jannik Sinner	24	12,400	19
3	Alexander Zverev	28	5,205	22
4	Novak Djokovic	38	4,720	18
5	Lorenzo Musetti	24	4,265	22
6	Alex de Minaur	27	4,095	22
7	Felix Auger-Aliassime	25	4,000	26
8	Taylor Fritz	28	3,870	23
9	Ben Shelton	23	3,860	22
10	Daniil Medvedev	30	3,610	24
11	Alexander Bublik	28	3,345	25
12	Casper Ruud	27	2,625	22
13	Flavio Cobolli	23	2,520	29
14	Jiri Lehecka	24	2,490	22
15	Karen Khachanov	29	2,410	24

Top Indians ▶

Sumit Nagal
Rank 281 ▼ 3 spots

Karan Singh
Rank 413 ▲ 32 spots

WTA Women's Top 15

#	Player	Age	Points	Events
1	Aryna Sabalenka	27	11,025	20
2	Elena Rybakina	26	8,108	22
3	Coco Gauff	22	7,278	20
4	Iga Swiatek	24	7,263	20
5	Jessica Pegula	32	6,243	22
6	Amanda Anisimova	24	6,180	21
7	Elina Svitolina	31	3,965	16
8	Jasmine Paolini	30	3,907	20
9	Victoria Mboko	19	3,531	21
10	Mirra Andreeva	18	3,121	20
11	Karolina Muchova	29	2,993	16
12	Belinda Bencic	29	2,983	19
13	Ekaterina Alexandrova	31	2,973	26
14	Linda Noskova	21	2,801	23
15	Naomi Osaka	28	2,324	21

Top Indians ▶

Sahaja Yamalapalli
Rank 385 ▲ 6 spots

Vaishnavi Adkar
Rank 391 ▲ 6 spots

English Premier League Standings

#	Team	GP	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
1	Arsenal	31	21	7	3	61	22	39	70
2	Man. City	30	18	7	5	60	28	32	61
3	Man. United	31	15	10	6	56	43	13	55
4	Aston Villa	31	16	6	9	42	37	5	54
5	Liverpool	31	14	7	10	50	42	8	49
6	Chelsea	31	13	9	9	53	38	15	48
7	Brentford	31	13	7	11	46	42	4	46
8	Everton	31	13	7	11	37	35	2	46
9	Fulham	31	13	5	13	43	44	-1	44
10	Brighton	31	11	10	10	41	37	4	43
11	Sunderland	31	11	10	10	32	36	-4	43
12	Newcastle	31	12	6	13	44	45	-1	42
13	Bournemouth	31	9	15	7	46	48	-2	42
14	Crystal Palace	30	10	9	11	33	35	-2	39
15	Leeds United	31	7	12	12	37	48	-11	33
16	N. Forest	31	8	8	15	31	43	-12	32
17	Tottenham	31	7	9	15	40	50	-10	30
18	West Ham	31	7	8	16	36	57	-21	29
19	Burnley	31	4	8	19	33	61	-28	20
20	Wolves	31	3	8	20	24	54	-30	17

Italian Serie A Standings

#	Team	GP	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
1	Inter Milan	30	22	3	5	66	24	42	69
2	AC Milan	30	18	9	3	47	23	24	63
3	Napoli	30	19	5	6	46	30	16	62
4	Como	30	16	9	5	53	22	31	57
5	Juventus	30	15	9	6	52	29	23	54
6	Roma	30	17	3	10	40	23	17	54
7	Atalanta	30	13	11	6	41	27	14	50
8	Lazio	30	11	10	9	31	28	3	43
9	Bologna	30	12	6	12	38	36	2	42
10	Sassuolo	30	11	6	13	36	40	-4	39
11	Udinese	30	11	6	13	35	42	-7	39
12	Parma	30	8	10	12	21	38	-17	34
13	Genoa	30	8	9	13	36	42	-6	33
14	Torino	30	9	6	15	34	53	-19	33
15	Cagliari	30	7	9	14	31	42	-11	30
16	Fiorentina	30	6	11	13	35	44	-9	29
17	Cremonese	30	6	9	15	25	44	-19	27
18	Lecce	30	7	6	17	21	40	-19	27
19	Verona	30	3	9	18	22	52	-30	18
20	Pisa	30	2	12	16	23	54	-31	18

Spanish LaLiga Standings

#	Team	GP	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
1	Barcelona	29	24	1	4	78	28	50	73
2	Real Madrid	29	22	3	4	63	26	37	69
3	Villarreal	29	18	4	7	54	34	20	58
4	Atletico Madrid	29	17	6	6	49	28	21	57
5	Real Betis	29	11	11	7	44	37	7	44
6	Celta Vigo	29	10	11	8	41	35	6	41
7	Real Sociedad	29	10	8	11	44	45	-1	38
8	Getafe	29	11	5	13	25	31	-6	38
9	Athletic Club	29	11	5	13	32	41	-9	38
10	Osasuna	29	10	7	12	34	35	-1	37
11	Espanyol	29	10	7	12	36	44	-8	37
12	Valencia	29	9	8	12	32	42	-10	35
13	Girona	29	8	10	11	31	44	-13	34
14	Rayo Vallecano	29	7	11	11	28	35	-7	32
15	Sevilla	29	8	7	14	37	49	-12	31
16	Alaves	29	8	7	14	30	41	-11	31
17	Elche	29	6	11	12	38	46	-8	29
18	Real Mallorca	29	7	7	15	34	47	-13	28
19	Levante	29	6	8	15	34	48	-14	26
20	Real Oviedo	29	4	9	16	20	48	-28	21

German Bundesliga Standings

#	Team	GP	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
1	Bayern	27	22	4	1	97	25	72	70
2	Dortmund	27	18	7	2	58	28	30	61
3	Stuttgart	27	16	5	6	56	36	20	53
4	RB Leipzig	27	15	5	7	53	35	18	50
5	Hoffenheim	27	15	5	7	54	39	15	50
6	Leverkusen	27	13	7	7	52	36	16	46
7	E. Frankfurt	27	10	8	9	50	51	-1	38
8	SC Freiburg	27	10	7	10	39	44	-5	37
9	Union Berlin	27	8	7	12	31	46	-15	31
10	FC Augsburg	27	9	4	14	33	50	-17	31
11	Mainz	27	7	9	11	33	42	-9	30
12	Hamburg	27	7	9	11	31	40	-9	30
13	M'gladbach	27	7	8	12	33	46	-13	29
14	Werder	27	7	7	13	30	47	-17	28
15	Cologne	27	6	8	13	38	47	-9	26
16	St Pauli	27	6	6	15	24	44	-20	24
17	Wolfsburg	27	5	6	16	35	57	-22	21
18	Heidenheim	27	3	6	18	27	61	-34	15

Test Batting

#	Player	Rating	Career best
1	Joe Root	880	932
2	Harry Brook	857	898
3	Travis Head	853	884
4	Steve Smith	831	947
5	Kane Williamson	822	919
6	Kamindu Mendis	781	784
7	Temba Bavuma	775	806
8	Yashasvi Jaiswal	750	858
9	Saud Shakeel	734	787
10	Shubman Gill	730	807

Test Bowling

#	Player	Rating	Career best
1	Jasprit Bumrah	879	908
2	Noman Ali	843	853
3	Mitchell Starc	838	852
4	Matt Henry	836	853
5	Pat Cummins	832	914
6	Marco Jansen	825	825
7	Scott Boland	820	820
8	Kagiso Rabada	807	902
9	Josh Hazlewood	775	864
10	Nathan Lyon	753	812

ODI Batting

#	Player	Rating	Career best
1	Daryl Mitchell	840	840
2	Virat Kohli	791	908
3	Ibrahim Zadran	756	756
4	Rohit Sharma	748	879
5	Shubman Gill	716	841
6	Babar Azam	684	894
7	Shai Hope	679	782
7	Harry Tector	679	730
9	K.L. Rahul	664	676
9	Salman Agha	664	664

ODI Bowling

#	Player	Rating	Career best
1	Rashid Khan	705	775
2	Jofra Archer	649	682
3	Keshav Maharaj	645	737
4	Bernard Scholtz	630	631
5	Adil Rashid	629	671
6	Josh Hazlewood	626	725
7	Mehidy Hasan	624	722
7	Maheesh Theekshana	624	680
7	Kuldeep Yadav	624	757
10	Mitchell Santner	617	656

T20I Batting

#	Player	Rating	Career best
1	Abhishek Sharma	875	931
2	Ishan Kishan	871	871
3	Sahibzada Farhan	848	848
4	Phil Salt	792	881
5	Pathum Nissanka	766	796
6	Tilak Varma	742	845
7	Suryakumar Yadav	722	912
8	Jos Buttler	716	794
9	Tim Seifert	712	749
10	Dewald Brevis	709	738

T20I Bowling

#	Player	Rating	Career best
1	Rashid Khan	753	828
2	Varun Chakaravarthy	740	818
3	Abrar Ahmed	736	757
4	Adil Rashid	721	747
5	Jasprit Bumrah	702	783
6	Adam Zampa	682	746
7	Corbin Bosch	669	745
8	Matthew Forde	667	679
9	Mustafizur Rahman	665	718
10	Mujeeb Ur Rahman	663	757

THE HINDU GROUP

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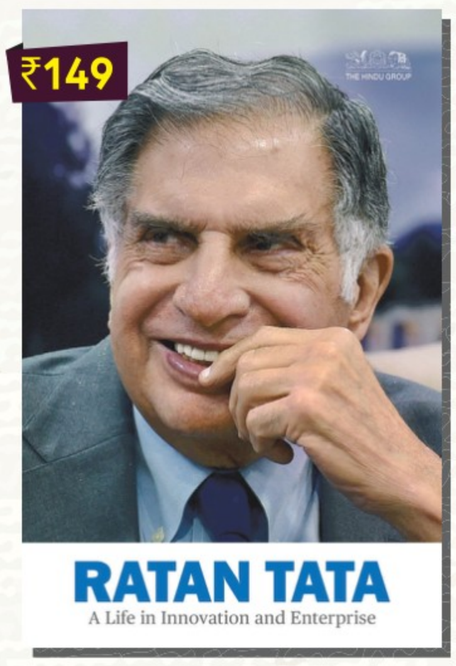

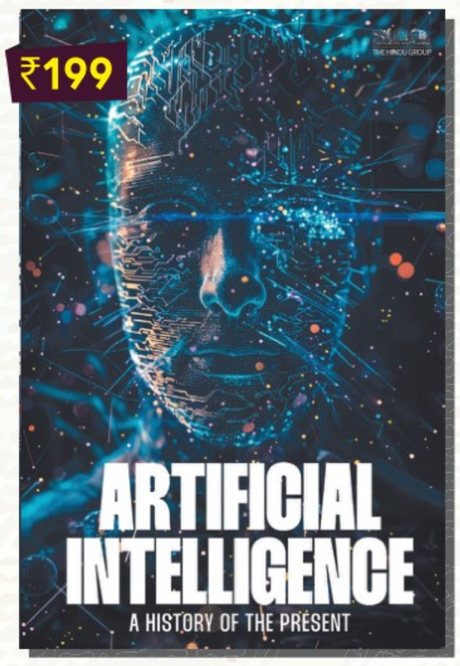

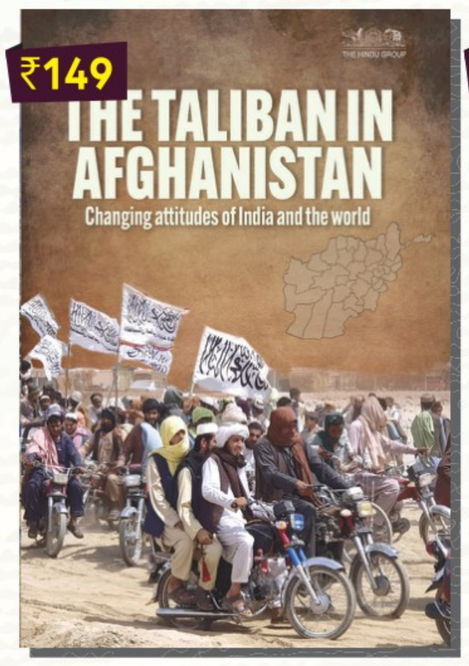

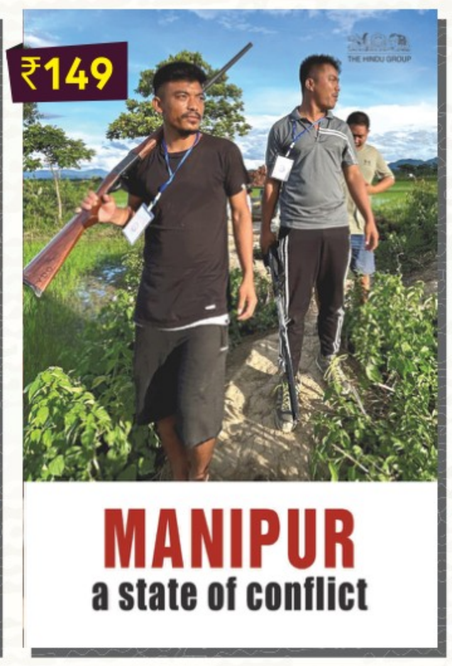

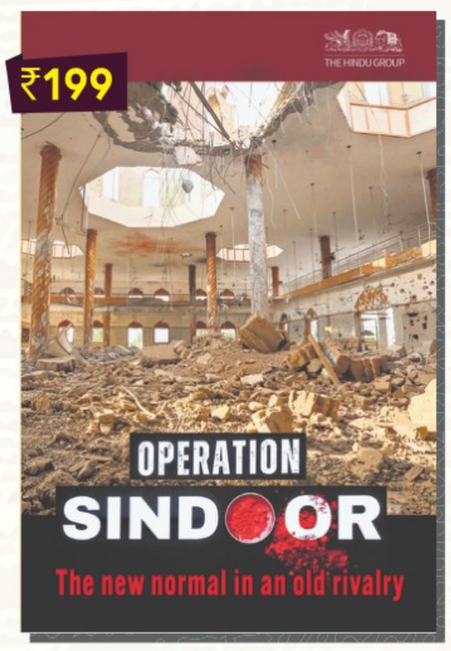

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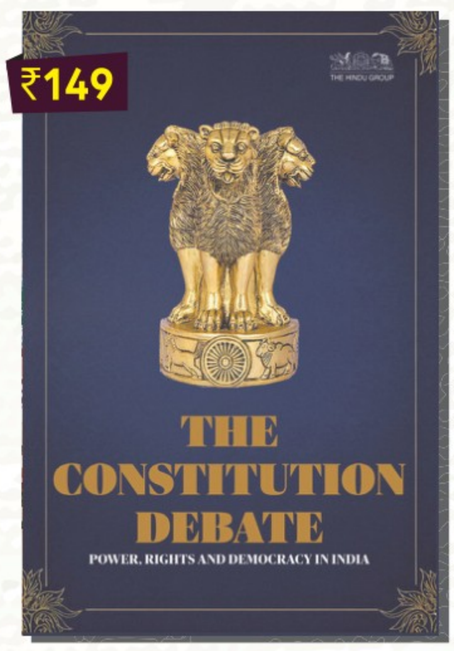

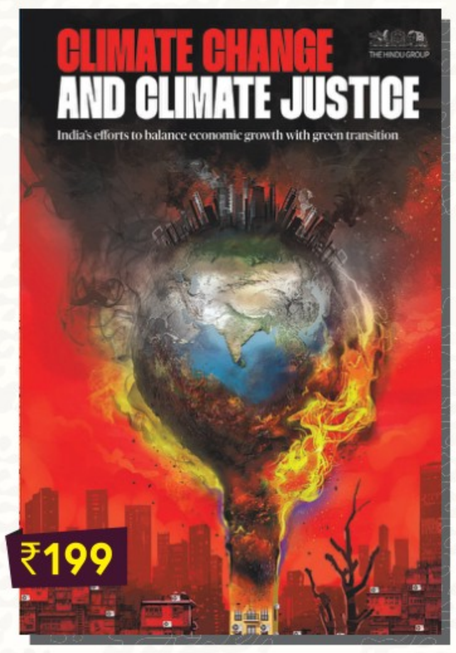

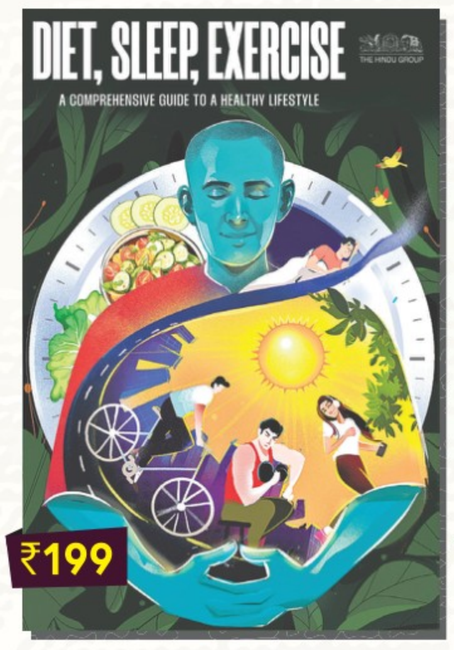

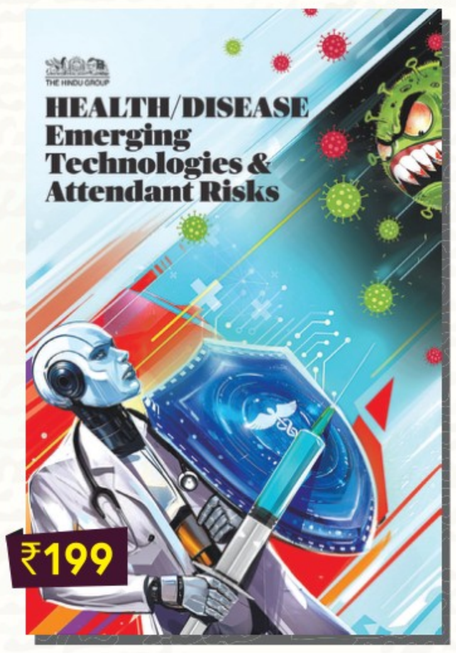

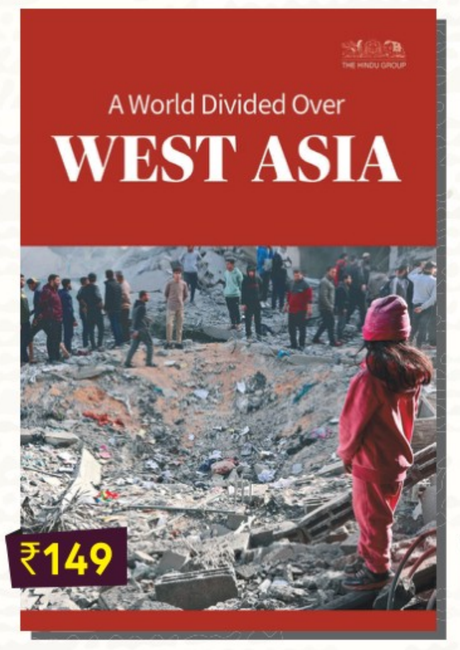

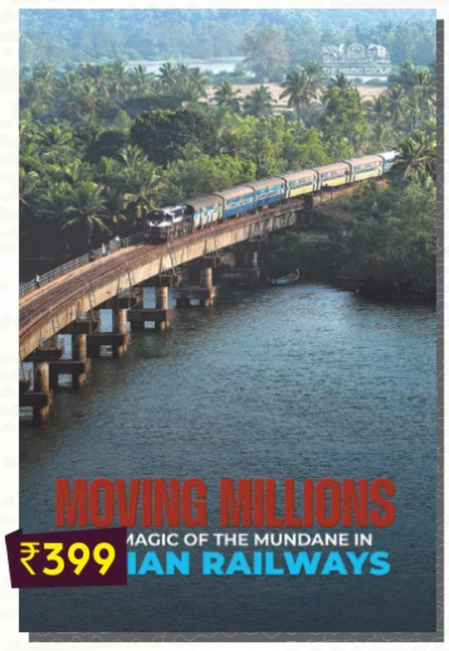

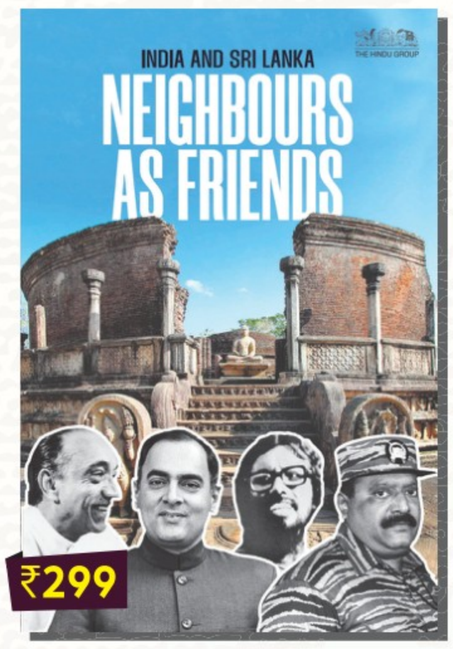

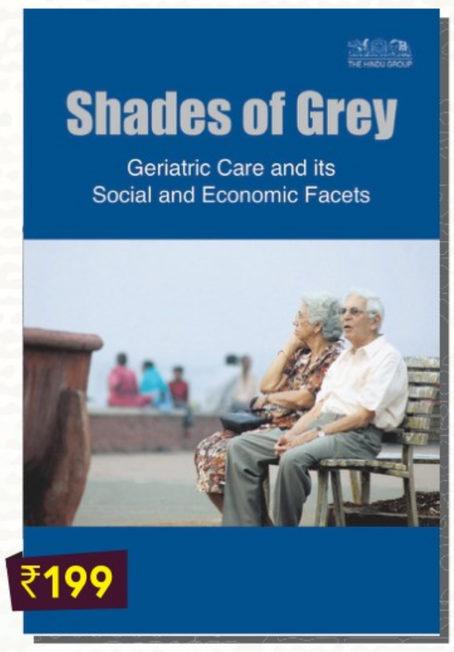

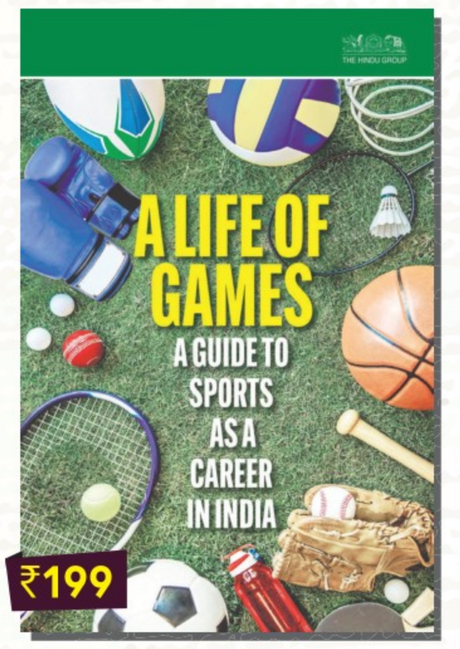

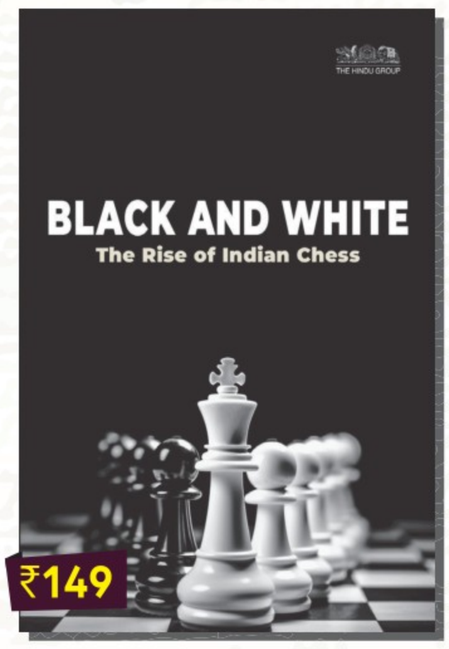

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Farmer's daughter wins four gold medals and tops varsity

University topper Sneha says she wants to pursue PhD in Chemistry, engage in research, and become a professor

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Sneha T., a farmer's daughter from Doddasanne village in the Devanahalli taluk of Bengaluru Rural district, has emerged as the university topper by winning four gold medals in MSc Chemistry at Dr. Manmohan Singh Bengaluru City University, this year.

Sneha's parents, Thimmarayappa and Bhagyamma, are farmers who grow flowers and vegetables, and Sneha used to travel to the university from Devanahalli every day.

Currently working as an assistant professor at BGS Science Academy and Research Center in Chickballapur, Sneha said she wants to pursue PhD in Chemistry, engage in research, and become a professor.

"I used to travel from my hometown to college every day, so half a day would be lost in travel. I would sleep during the journey. But I had been studying the day's lessons that day itself from the beginning of the year. I used to dedicate weekends to studies," she said.

Sneha T

Abhishek Sriram

Sneha said that since childhood, she had been curious about chemical reactions. "So, I took up chemistry in MSc. Our university has an excellent lab and good faculty, which helped me," she said.

Abhishek Sriram from Seshadripuram Institute of Commerce & Management, has bagged three gold medals for securing the highest marks in BCom and has emerged as the second topper of the university. Sriram intends to become a civil servant and has joined a coaching programme for the Civil Service Exam (CSE) in Bengaluru.

Sriram said his parents never put any pressure on him, and in fact never asked about his marks and rankings, and that helped ease pressure.

"I want to become a civil servant. Therefore, instead of joining a postgraduate course, I am preparing for the civil services exam. It has been my dream for many years to join the civil services," he added.

Most rank holders are girls this year too

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Like many years earlier, most of the rank holders are girls this year too, at the fifth annual convocation of Dr. Manmohan Singh Bengaluru City University to be held on Saturday.

Out of total 71 rank holders, 57 are girls. Of the rank holders, 42 students are from postgraduate courses and 29 from undergraduate courses.

Among the rank holders, 49 students will receive 64 gold medals and cash prizes, out of which 46 gold medals are instituted by Dr. Manmohan Singh Bengaluru City University and 18 gold medals by different donors.

A total of 37,393 students are eligible to receive their degree at the convocation. Out of them, 21,912 (58.63%) are female and 15,458 (47.31%) are male students. Also, 23 PhD scholars will receive degree certificates.

Binay Kumar Das, Director General, Defence Research and Development Organisation, will be the chief guest on the occasion and deliver the convocation address.

Divyasree S. from Krupanidhi College of Commerce and Management in Chikka Bellandur has received three gold medals for securing the highest marks in BBA and has emerged as the second topper of the university.

Six, including Venkatesh Prasad and Arjun Janya, to get honorary doctorate

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The announcement of Dr. Manmohan Singh Bengaluru City University that it would confer honorary doctorates- Honoris Causa Degree and Doctor of Letters- on two politicians, who are among six individuals to receive the honour, has raised eyebrows.

The list also includes former Indian pacer from Bengaluru B.K. Venkatesh Prasad, who has been recently elected as the president of Karnataka State Cricket Association (KSCA), and music composer and filmmaker Arjun Janya.

The two politicians are Congress MLC K. Govindaraj, former political secretary to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, who was sacked in the aftermath of the stampede that killed 11 persons during the celebrations of Royal Challengers Bengaluru on June 4, 2025, and B.M. Farooq, an industrialist from Mangaluru identified with the Janata Dal (Secular). He was an MLC from JD(S) for a term, elected in 2018.

B.K. Venkatesh Prasad

Arjun Janya

The announcement of the university that it will confer honorary doctorates on two politicians has raised eyebrows

The other two recipients are Mohan Alva, chairman, Alva's Education Foundation, Moodbidri, and T.K. Narayanappa, educationist and chairman of Padmashree Group of Institutions. Alva's Nudisiri, an annual literary and cultural meet, has earlier been boycotted by several progressive writers. It can be recalled that Minister for Higher Education M.C. Sudhakar had recently written to Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot urging him to form an expert committee to frame guidelines for public universities in the State to award honorary doctorates.

"Concerns have recently been raised in the public domain and on the floor of Karnataka Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council regarding instances where multiple universities have conferred honorary doctorates upon the same individual, and the absence of uniform criteria or limits governing such conferments," the letter said.

Commemorating the crucifixion

Members of the Christian community re-enacting the crucifixion of Jesus Christ on Good Friday, at St. Theresa's Church on J.C. Road in Bengaluru on Friday. K. MURALI KUMAR

GBA logo with image of Kempe Gowda and logos of five corporations unveiled

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) has unveiled official logos for both the authority and the five city corporations on its website.

While the GBA logo features the image of Kempe Gowda along with the iconic Kempe Gowda tower, the logos of the five corporations retain only the tower, each distinguished by a different colour.

English and Kannada

All the logos carry the respective corporation names in both Kannada and English.

According to a GBA official, the designs were approved during an executive meeting chaired by Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar in March.

The logos have been released on the corporations' websites and were said to have been developed as part of their maiden budgets.

The logos of Greater Bengaluru Authority and the five corporations. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Until now, all five corporations continued to function under the erstwhile Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) website, even seven months after their formation. During their maiden budget announcements, all corporations except the East City Corporation had indicated plans to launch independent websites to bring "transparency", the GBA official said.

The East City Corporation, however, had only proposed setting up a "public dashboard".

'Private hospitals should mandatorily report minor pregnancy cases under POCSO Act'

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Health Department has directed private hospitals to mandatorily report cases of minor pregnancies under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, warning that failure to do so would invite legal action against both doctors and hospital managements.

As per the provisions of the Act, all cases involving pregnant girls below 18 years must be reported to the authorities.

Guidelines issued by the Health Commissioner on April 1, 2026 stated that if a minor is admitted to a private hospital, the treating doctor must immediately inform the nearest Special Juvenile Police Unit or the local police station. Officials have also instructed that such cases should be promptly reported to the Child Helpline by dialling Childline 1098, to facilitate timely protection and rehabilitation measures.

Documentation

Private hospitals have been asked to maintain proper documentation of POCSO cases and ensure that medical records are preserved in accordance with legal requirements.

They must also safeguard patient confidentiality while extending necessary cooperation to investigating authorities.

Further, the Department has emphasised the need for all private hospitals to sensitise their doctors and staff about the provisions and responsibilities under the POCSO Act.

Review flags the impact on parents, health professionals

Afshan Yasmeen
BENGALURU

A recent review by researchers from NIHMANS has underlined the profound and long-lasting impact of suicides among children and adolescents on both bereaved parents and mental health professionals, while calling for stronger, structured support systems.

The paper, titled "The impact of suicidal deaths of children and adolescents among parents and mental health professionals: A systematic review and meta-synthesis", has been published in the *British Psychological Society journal - Psychology and Psychotherapy: Theory, Research and Practice*. It draws on an analysis of 25 studies to examine shared and distinct experiences of grief.

Bino Thomas, additional professor of Psychiatric Social Work at NIMHANS, who is one of the authors, told *The Hindu* that the loss of a child to suicide leaves both families and clinicians grappling with unanswered questions.

The review points to gaps in postvention- support provided after a suicide- for both parents and professionals. SUDHAKARA JAIN

"After months of therapy, there is always a relationship that mental health professionals build with children. When a child dies by suicide, it leaves us with questions- whether we did enough, whether we missed something, what went wrong," he said.

He pointed out that such losses often bring emotional strain for professionals as well. "There is a belief that doctors do not feel pain, but we do. We regulate our emotions, but the grief is real," he said, stating that in some cases, parents and therapists grieve together, which can help make sense of the loss.

Shared grief

The study finds that parents experience intense and prolonged grief marked by guilt, self-blame, and a persistent search for answers. Many struggle with stigma and isolation, while their mental health vulnerabilities may increase over time.

CHILD SUICIDES

At the same time, mental health professionals experience a parallel emotional burden. The death of a client can trigger self-doubt, fear of blame, and questions about professional competence. "Losing a client challenges our core belief that we should be able to keep every child safe," Dr. Thomas said.

The review also highlights that predicting suicide remains complex and uncertain, with clinicians often unable to foresee outcomes despite careful assessment.

Gaps in support systems

The review points to gaps in postvention- support provided after a suicide- for both parents and professionals. While some support mechanisms exist, they are often fragmented or short-lived. "For professionals, support systems are available, but they need to be actively used- through colleagues, mentors, and supervisors," Dr. Thomas said.

He stressed that younger practitioners, in particular, must be encouraged to seek guidance rather than suppress their distress. "Pushing away grief does not make it disappear," he said.

For families, the challenge is more acute. "Support often ends with the child's death, but the grief and guilt continue. Many parents find it difficult to return to the same system for help," he said.

Continuous care

The researchers have called for integrated, trauma-informed approaches that ensure continuity of care for bereaved families, along with structured institutional support for professionals. They emphasised that parents should be engaged as active participants in their child's mental health care with transparent communication on suicide risk, while postvention support must be long-term, flexible and responsive to the evolving needs of families rather than confined to the immediate aftermath.

At the same time, institutions need to create non-judgmental and reflective spaces for mental health professionals to process grief, strengthen supervision and peer-support systems- particularly for younger practitioners- and put in place clear protocols to support clinicians in the event of a client's suicide.

Dr. Thomas said NIMHANS has initiated family-based programmes and support groups for parents across the country, with participation varying each week.

"We need to continue holding the hands of these parents even after the loss. Postvention cannot be an afterthought- it is as important as prevention," he added.

PHOTO: THULASI KAKKAT

Coming from Manchester, there were no culture shocks for me in India

Ashley Westwood takes the reins at Kerala Blasters with the team floundering in the ISL. But the Englishman knows what it takes to succeed in India, thanks to his experience with Bengaluru FC. In this conversation, he discusses his managerial stints around the world, his formative years in the Manchester United Academy, winning promotion to the Premier League as a player, and what he picked up from Alex Ferguson's methods

INTERVIEW

Ashley Westwood

P.K. Ajith Kumar

Ashley Westwood is back in India. And he is glad to be back in the country where he had his first real taste of football management. Last week, he took charge of a struggling Kerala Blasters midway through the ongoing ISL season. The former England youth international, who trained at the Manchester United Academy during Alex Ferguson's reign and went on to play for Bradford City in the English Premier League, spoke at length to *The Hindu* a couple of days after he arrived in Kochi. Excerpts:

You had a great start in India, taking Bengaluru FC to the I-League title in the club's maiden season. Bengaluru went on to win the I-League again after a year's gap, and also won the Federation Cup.

> Starting the club [Bengaluru FC] from fresh, going from zero fans to maybe 25,000 in my last game is obviously something that I cherish

Being successful is always good. The Bangalore experience over the three years was most pleasant. It was my first real taste of in-charge management. For me, the highlight was getting our players into the national team. We had, of course, Sunil Chhetri and Robin Singh. And then many other players made their debuts: Rino Anto, C.K. Vineeth...

And we had signed up Eugeneson Lyngdoh, who then became the most expensive player in the ISL at the time. To find a player, bring them, train them, develop them, and then they make their debuts for national teams... That is gratifying for a coach.

So many memories that stick out – winning the league twice, the Federation Cup. Being successful in the AFC Cup was huge. And then winning two Coach of the Year awards was the icing on the cake. Starting the club from fresh, going from zero fans to maybe 25,000 in my last game is obviously also something that I cherish.

What were your expectations before coming to India?

None. I felt, 'Just go there and try.' I just came with a blank canvas. And coming from Manchester, there were no culture shocks for me in India.

Looking further back, to your playing career, your memories of being a part of the Bradford City team that earned promotion to the Premier League for the 1999-2000 season?

We beat Wolverhampton Wanderers to secure the promotion. And before that we had a big game against Wimbledon at home. I think we were fortunate. John Hartson got sent off, which helped us. So, thank you, John, for that. Those were good times. To be in and around one of the best leagues in the world is always fantastic. It was always a dream to play in the Premier League. At the time, you don't realise, you just get on with it. When you look back and you see the Premiership now, it makes you realise that it was a special time.

The players and coaches you grew up admiring?

When I look back to when I was very young, there was the captain of England and Manchester United at the time, which was Bryan Robson. A top player who could do anything, and had leadership qualities, too. He had the will to win, and was very tough. So, for me, it starts and kind of ends with Bryan Robson as a real leader to follow. When it comes to managers, Sir Alex comes on top of the list. He influenced me. And there is a name that people won't know too much – Dario Gradi at Crewe Alexandra.

Gradi played a key role in your career, didn't he?

Yes, he did. Back in the day, in 1993, '94, he was playing 4-3-3; total football, when a lot of teams were playing 4-4-2 long balls. So, he showed me a different side to football regarding, you know, technical football with the ball on the ground. He was advanced for his time; England wasn't quite doing that then.

> [Alex Ferguson] had great leadership qualities, and I got great lessons ... to learn off the best, to know what to do, to become a winner, to achieve things

How was life at the academy in Manchester?

It is one of the best in the world. I was fortunate to sign at the age of 10; I started playing football at five. And I was lucky to have good facilities and a good platform to try and flourish in my chosen career. It is no rocket science. Look at Luke Littler, who is the best darts player in the world. He started playing darts at three and he played every single day. And now, all of a sudden, at 19 years of age, he is the best darts player because he has practised more than anybody else.

How much did you gain from working with one of the greatest coaches of all time, Alex Ferguson?

He had great leadership qualities, and I got great lessons as a young child. Then into the early adult years, to learn off the best, to know what to do, to become a winner, to achieve things. And no secret, he was one of the most hard-working coaches there is.

How was he with children like you?

He showed an interest in us; he gave his time. You know, he was the first-team manager, but always invested time in watching the youth players. And his work ethic was as good as anybody's in the world.

When you became a coach, did you try to do something that you learnt from him?

Yes, of course. The desire to win, and the same format, same formula: work hard, dedicate, and sometimes you get results.

Winning the FA Youth Cup with Manchester United must have been one of the highlights of your career as a player.

Yeah, for sure. Before beating Tottenham Hotspur, we defeated many good teams, such as Aston Villa and Charlton Athletic. I still remember the finals. And then at the same time, I was representing England at youth team level.

Among your teammates was Phil Neville...

Both Nevilles, in fact. Gary a year older, Phil a year younger. I was sandwiched between the Neville brothers.

Your last two assignments have been with national teams – Hong Kong and Afghanistan. You did especially well with Hong Kong.

Yes, Hong Kong had 10 wins in 15 months, and it is not normal for a team ranked 159th in the world. The case was similar with Afghanistan as well. You know, we had lost 8-1 to Qatar, but in my second-last game, we drew 0-0 with them. And Qatar had just won the Asian Cup. We also drew and then beat India. I think it was for the first time that Afghanistan was beating India in India. For me it was time to leave Hong Kong, that was why I came here.

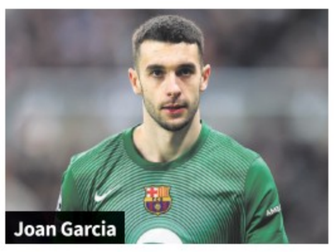
And Hong Kong followed you; they came here for the AFC Asian Cup qualifier against India.

I know, they seem to be following me around.

GAME THEORY

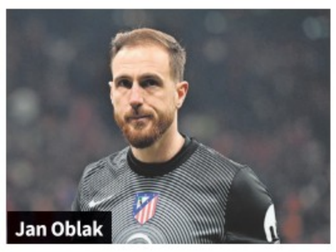
Top shot-stoppers in LaLiga 2025-26

We take a look at how often goalkeepers in Spain's top flight have saved shots and kept clean sheets so far this season. Barcelona's Joan Garcia has both the highest save% and the highest clean sheet%.



Joan Garcia

Thibaut Courtois



Jan Oblak

Goalkeeper	Club	Games	Shots on target faced	Saves	Save%	Clean sheets	Clean sheet %
Joan Garcia	Barcelona	23	78	63	80.8	12	52.2
Thibaut Courtois	Real Madrid	28	78	58	74.4	11	39.3
Jan Oblak	Atletico Madrid	26	82	58	70.7	10	38.5
Luiz Junior	Villarreal	26	87	65	73.6	8	30.8
Augusto Batalla	Rayo Vallecano	29	108	78	72.2	8	27.6
Ionut Radu	Celta Vigo	29	112	82	71.4	8	27.6
David Soria	Getafe	29	124	93	75.8	8	27.6
Marko Dmitrovic	Espanyol	29	135	96	71.1	7	24.1
Aaron Escandell	Oviedo	29	166	124	73.5	7	24.1
Sergio Herrera	Osasuna	29	124	96	77.4	7	24.1
Alvaro Valles	Real Betis	20	84	60	70.2	6	30.0
Paulo Gazzaniga	Girona	26	129	97	75.2	5	19.2
Mathew Ryan	Levante	27	138	99	71.0	5	18.5
Unai Simon	Athletic Club	29	116	79	67.2	5	17.2
Julen Agirrezabala	Valencia	18	79	52	65.8	4	22.2
Stole Dimitrievski	Valencia	11	35	26	74.3	4	36.4
Inaki Pena	Elche	16	81	55	67.9	4	25.0
Odysseas Vlachodimos	Sevilla	25	105	72	67.6	4	16.0
Antonio Sivera	Alaves	29	114	77	67.5	3	10.3
Matias Dituro	Elche	13	52	37	71.2	2	15.4
Alex Remiro	Real Sociedad	29	115	75	65.2	2	6.9
Leo Roman	Mallorca	24	114	80	69.3	1	4.2

Luiz Junior

SOURCE: FBREF.COM | MINIMUM 10 GAMES PLAYED

PICTURE THIS

GETTY IMAGES

Beauty spot

A blend of tradition and glamour, with a history dating back to the late 1890s, the Monte-Carlo Masters marks the start of the European clay season.

Laid out over more than three hectares, the 21 courts — arranged in tiers facing the glittering Mediterranean Sea — host the first of three ATP Masters 1000 tournaments on the red dirt.

For the event, the otherwise-exclusive Principality, inhabited by the rich and the famous, throws open its doors to the world.

Interestingly, the Monte-Carlo Country Club — despite its name — is located in France (Roquebrune-Cap-Martin), just 150 meters outside Monaco's north-eastern border.

The event is both a player- and fan-favourite. It draws a list of minor and major celebrities, who, it often appears, are just as keen to see (tennis) as they are to be seen (at the tennis).

Rafael Nadal won a record 11 Monte-Carlo titles, including an Open Era record of eight successive triumphs.

Carlos Alcaraz, the man many consider Nadal's successor on the dirt, is the defending champion at the event, which gets underway this weekend.

Ask Centre and not State about LPG shortage: CM

Siddaramaiah's reaction comes in the wake of the announcement by auto drivers who have set a deadline for State govt. to normalise the supply of auto LPG

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Autorickshaw drivers in Bengaluru have set a deadline until Monday for the State government to normalise the supply of auto LPG, warning of intensified protests if their demands are not met.

The drivers have threatened to lay siege to the residence of Food and Civil Supplies Minister K. H. Muniyappa if the crisis persists beyond the stipulated time.

The city has been witnessing a shortage of LPG for autorickshaws over the past two days, with drivers queueing up for kilometres outside fuel stations. The disruption in supply is being attributed to the ongoing conflict in West Asia, which has affected fuel logistics and availability.

The disruption in supply is attributed to the ongoing conflict in West Asia, which has affected fuel logistics and availability. K. MURALI KUMAR

Raghu Narayan Gowda, State president of the Peace Auto Union, alleged that the current crisis had been exacerbated by the diversion of LPG supplies to the hotel industry.

"When the LPG shortage began, hotel associations held meetings and warned the government of a shutdown. Following this, their allocation was increased from 50% to 70%. We believe that the LPG meant for autorickshaws is being diverted to them," he charged.

Expressing frustration over the situation, Mr. Gowda said autorickshaw unions had decided to launch protests. "We are giving the government time until Monday. If supplies are not restored by then, we will be forced to lay siege to the Minister's residence," he added.

Reacting to the unions' warning, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said that the protest should instead be directed at the Centre. "Instead of laying siege to our Minister's house, they should lay siege to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's residence," he remarked. Mr. Siddaramaiah maintained that the responsibility of ensuring adequate LPG supply was with the Central government.

"The State government is only responsible for distribution. The Centre must take action to address the shortage," he said, reiterating that the issue stemmed from supply constraints beyond the State's control.

Meanwhile, on Thursday, Mr. Muniyappa acknowledged the difficulties faced by autorickshaw drivers due to long queues outside LPG stations. He urged private oil companies to sell auto LPG at rates comparable to those offered by public sector outlets.

According to the Minister, higher prices at private fuel stations had pushed drivers towards government-run outlets, resulting in overcrowding.

"Around 3,000 auto LPG cylinders are consumed daily, and these are currently being supplied by government outlets," he said, while also appealing to the Centre to regulate private LPG suppliers to ease the burden on drivers.

> The State government is only responsible for distribution, and the Centre must take action to address the shortage
>
> **SIDDARAMAIAH**
> Chief Minister

(Top) An auto LPG dispensing station in Bengaluru is closed owing to disruptions in supply. (Bottom) Kannada Chaluvali Vatal Paksha leader Vatal Nagaraj and his supporters staging a protest over the LPG crisis, which has put autorickshaw drivers to hardships, in Bengaluru on Friday. K. MURALI KUMAR

LPG crisis sparks surge in interest for e-autos

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Amid an ongoing shortage of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) affecting autorickshaw operations across Bengaluru, there has been a noticeable spike in enquiries about electric autorickshaws, signalling a potential shift in interest towards alternative fuel vehicles.

Electric auto drivers say they are increasingly being approached by their LPG-dependent counterparts seeking details on vehicle cost, charging time, maintenance and overall performance. The trend comes at a time when many drivers are struggling with long queues and inconsistent LPG supply.

Iqbal Saab, an electric autorickshaw driver from Banashankari, said that the past two days have seen a sharp rise in curiosity among fellow drivers. "After the LPG shortage began, many auto drivers have been asking me about the cost, charging time and performance of electric autos. On a full charge, I can operate for over five hours. The maintenance cost is under ₹500 per month, and the running cost comes to roughly 50 paise per kilometre. Now, many drivers tell me I am fortunate not to be facing the current difficulties," he said. The recent surge in fuel prices, triggered by West Asia conflict, has increased operating costs for conventional fuel-based vehicles. This has, in turn, revived attention towards electric vehicles (EVs), including electric cars, autos, two-wheelers and plug-in hybrids.

Electric auto drivers say they are increasingly being approached by their LPG-dependent counterparts seeking details on vehicle cost, charging time, maintenance and overall performance. FILE PHOTO

Higher upfront cost

However, the higher upfront cost of electric autos remains a key concern for drivers. In Bengaluru, electric autorickshaws are priced between ₹3.33 lakh and ₹3.47 lakh (ex-showroom), while conventional LPG autos cost between ₹2.22 lakh and ₹2.53 lakh, (ex-showroom) depending on the variant and configuration. This places the cost of electric autos roughly ₹80,000 to ₹1.25 lakh higher than their conventional counterparts, making the initial investment a significant barrier despite lower running costs.

Ramesh K., an autorickshaw driver from J.P. Nagar, admitted that hesitation had earlier prevented many from adopting electric vehicles.

"When electric autos were introduced, a few drivers bought them, but many of us were sceptical. We typically cover around 50 km a day, and there were concerns about battery range and charging infrastructure. Now, with the LPG shortage, I realise that switching earlier could have made things easier. An electric auto would have been a more reliable option in a situation like this," he said.

Dealers, too, have begun noticing a rise in enquiries, though they remain cautious about immediate conversions into sales. Poornima S., a sales executive at an electric auto showroom in Peenya, said, "We have received more calls and walk-in enquiries over the past couple of days, mainly from drivers affected by the LPG shortage. However, a large-scale shift may not happen immediately. Many drivers currently own older vehicles and would require significant investment to transition. Electric autos are relatively more expensive than conventional ones, so while enquiries have increased, they may not translate into immediate purchases. That said, we expect demand to grow in the coming months."

The recent surge in fuel prices, triggered by West Asia conflict, has increased operating costs for conventional fuel-based vehicles

While the exact number of electric autos operating in Bengaluru is not officially known, drivers say their presence is gradually increasing. Those already using electric vehicles highlight several advantages, including ease of driving, lower operating costs and improved passenger comfort.

Mr. Saab pointed out that electric autos offer a quieter and smoother ride. "These vehicles have more space, the seating is more comfortable, and there is no engine noise. Passengers often say they have better legroom compared to regular autos. The suspension is also good, so both drivers and passengers feel less impact on bad roads or potholes," he added.

Timings
BENGALURU

SATURDAY, APR. 04		
RISE	06:14	SET 18:31
RISE	20:27	SET 07:25
SUNDAY, APR. 05		
RISE	06:13	SET 18:31
RISE	21:18	SET 08:06
MONDAY, APR. 06		
RISE	06:13	SET 18:31
RISE	22:11	SET 08:51

Bengaluru Weather	max	min
Tumakuru	30	20
Mysuru	34	21
Bengaluru	33	22

Bengaluru Today
33°C The weather will be warm. Night will be slight cool. Short spell of light rain and thundershower is a chance at few places.

Bengaluru Tomorrow
34°C Morning will be pleasant. Day will be warm. Spell of rain and thundershower with gusty winds may occur.

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THE HINDU
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Pet dog shot dead over damage to crop

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

A pet dog was shot dead allegedly by a man and his wife, in a village near Doddaballapur.

The accused have been identified as Narayanaswamy and Nagamma, both residents of Reddihalli near Channarayapatna. There is no clarity whether the fire arm was licensed or not. Sources said the weapon was yet to be seized. When asked, an officer supervising the case told *The Hindu* that nothing can be "disclosed at this stage".

According to the complainant, Venkatesh, 63, the stepbrother of Narayanaswamy, the incident unfolded on March 31 around 9.30 p.m. Venkatesh was sitting outside his house with his family members when the accused arrived with a gun. Venkatesh told the police that Narayanaswamy accused their pet dog of repeatedly entering his cauliflower field and destroying the crop. The accused allegedly abused Venkatesh and his family for allowing the dog into his field and threatened to "shoot" them if the dog was seen near his crop, according to the FIR.

"While going back, they saw our dog near a drain next to our house and opened fire on the animal," Venkatesh told the police.

CCTV footage

In a purported CCTV footage circulating on social media, a man is seen opening fire on a dog, which attempts to escape but collapses after being hit.

Based on the complaint lodged by Venkatesh, the police have registered an FIR. Further probe is under way.

'Too many women STEM students drop out before entering careers'

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

While women enter STEM (science,technology, engineering and mathematics) education in large numbers in the country, too many drop out at the stage of entering professional roles, lamented Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, chairperson, Biocon.

"India does not have a pipeline problem in science, it has a transition problem," she said, while speaking at the onboarding of the first cohort of BioWISE, an initiative to empower women for employment in STEM (mostly in life sciences) areas, held at Biocon Park in the city on Friday. The Biocon Foundation, the Corporate Social Responsibility arm of Biocon, in collaboration with the Bengaluru Science and Technology Cluster (BeST Cluster) and the National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS), formally onboarded the first batch of BioWISE.

Biocon Foundation, in partnership with BeST Cluster and NCBS, onboards first BioWISE cohort of postgraduate women students. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

These 15 postgraduate women students were selected through a multi-stage process from over 350 applicants across tier 2 and tier 3 colleges in Karnataka for a six-month internship programme, including scholarship and mentorship. As part of the training programme, 25 women students, 15 postgraduates and 10 undergraduates from tier 2 and tier 3 universities across Karnataka would be supported with academic training spanning biotechnology, life sciences, microbiology, bioinformatics and allied disciplines, enabling them to build sustainable STEM careers.

The BioWISE was a strategic intervention where talent met opportunity, Ms. Mazumdar-Shaw said, adding, "This programme is about building confidence and ecosystems of support so women not only stay in science, but lead, innovate, and shape the future of India's scientific enterprise."

Fifteen women STEM training participants have been placed with the National Centre for Biological Sciences (1), Institute of Bioinformatics and Applied Biotechnology (2), Indian Institute of Science (5) and Biocon (7), where they would be working alongside scientists and industry professionals on live research and development programmes.

Man found dead in Cubbon Park

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

A man from Rajasthan was found dead in Cubbon Park on Friday. Police have registered an unnatural death report.

The deceased has been identified as Suresh Kumar Purohit, a worker at a shop on S.P. Road.

Police sources said that Purohit's friends had filed a missing person complaint at the Halasur Gate Police Station on Thursday. "Around 7 a.m., his location was traced to the Cubbon Park," said an investigator from the Cubbon Park Police Station, adding that the deceased had hung himself from a tree. No death note was found at the scene.

(Those in distress or having suicidal tendencies can seek help from Arogya Sahayavani Ph: 104.)

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VJNL hopeful of supplying water to Tumakuru by October

Rainfall data collected since 2017 shows average availability of 18 tmcft of water from the streams in the Western Ghats; VJNL claims the water available is more than sufficient for drinking purposes

Sathish G.T.
SHIVAMOGGA

With the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) according in-principle (stage-1) approval for diversion of 111.02 hectares of forest land in Hassan and Tumakuru districts for the Yettinahole Drinking Water Project, officials of Visvesvaraya Jala Nigam Limited are hopeful of supplying water from the Western Ghats to Tumakuru district by October 2026, and completing the project by October 2027, provided funds are made available.

The project aims to provide drinking water and fill the tanks in the drought-prone districts with a total population over 75 lakhs.

As per the design, 24.01 tmcft of water will be diverted during the monsoon from four streams – Yettinahole, Kadumane Hole, Keri Hole and Hongadahalla. Of this, 14.056 tmcft is earmarked for drinking water supply, while the remaining water will be used to fill 527 tanks up to 50% of their capacity.

Pipes laid for the Yettinahole water project at Sakleshpur in Hassan district. FILE PHOTO

Approved in 2012

The project was approved by the Karnataka government in July 2012 at an estimated cost of ₹8,323.5 crore. The cost was revised in February 2014 to ₹12,912.36 crore and again in January 2023 to ₹23,251.66 crore. As of the end of February 2026, the cumulative expenditure stood at ₹18,205.55 crore.

The project is being executed in two stages. The first stage, lift component, has been completed. Eight weirs were constructed to tap water from the streams. The stage that has been completed was commissioned in September 2024. In the absence of the gravity canal, the lifted water was temporarily diverted to Vani Vilas Sagar in Chitradurga district. Over the last two years, 3.283 tmcft of water has been diverted to the reservoir.

Sannachittaiah, Managing Director of VJNL, told *The Hindu* on Friday that in the second stage, the construction of gravity canal was going on. "Of the 252-km-long canal, work on 208 km has been completed. The work on 25 km is under progress. We could not tackle the remaining 16 km due to the forest issue. Now it has been resolved," said the officer.

The crucial 16-km stretch passes through Belur, Arsikere taluks of Hassan and Gubbi of Tumakuru. The officials are hopeful of completing the stretch with the cooperation of other departments and flow water up to Tumakuru by October 31, 2026.

"The feeder canals of Madhugiri, Pavagada and Gowribidanur have been completed and the T.G. Halli feeder is 90% complete. We are confident of taking water to Tumakuru district by October," the MD said. Similarly, if the government provided the remaining funds in two years, the project would be completed and people of Chikkaballapur and Kolar would get drinking water by October 2027.

Water availability

Since the start of the project, many have questioned the availability of 24.01 tmcft of water from the streams in the Western Ghats. The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) also questioned the VJNL's calculation of water availability.

The rainfall data collected from the rain gauges at the weirs in Sakaleshpur since 2017 projected average availability of 18 tmcft, which is 6 tmcft less than the designed quantity.

Mr. Sannachittaiah, however, claimed that there was no shortage of water for drinking water purposes. "This is primarily a drinking water project. Whenever there is excess availability of water, tanks will be filled up. Anyhow, there is no shortage to provide drinking water for people of 6,657 villages in 29 taluks of seven districts, besides 38 urban local bodies, covering over 75 lakh people," said the MD.

He added that VJNL has engaged consultants to conduct a pre-feasibility study to explore additional water availability at the Netravathi and Kumaradhara river junction to make up the shortfall of 6 tmcft.

Priyank urges X to probe 'mass reporting, follower stagnation' of Opposition leaders' handles

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Karnataka IT-BT Minister Priyank Kharge has urged social media platform X to look into the alleged mass-reporting of posts and stagnation of follower count of handles of Opposition leaders on the platform.

The post followed a note by Lok Sabha MP Shashi Tharoor on X, who said his follower count on the platform has been dropping and that his account is not being recommended to new users interested in the subjects he engages with.

Reposting this, Mr. Kharge noted that many accounts across the opposition ecosystem, including his, have been facing a similar experience.

"It is a well known toolkit where coordinated mass reporting of posts and accounts often leads to limited visibility and de-ranking in feeds. Now whether reach and follower count is being restricted by @X on its own volition or at someone's behest, is anybody's guess. Either way, it would be a welcome move for X to examine this more closely," he wrote, tagging X owner Elon Musk.

Priyank Kharge

Mr. Kharge currently has 2,26,500 followers. However, speaking to *The Hindu,* he said that the figure has remained more or less stagnant for the last three years despite some of his posts garnering more than a million views.

"BJP's troll mafia is mass-reporting opposition posts and the algorithm may pick it up. But X still controls visibility and potential followers. So why is the constant flagging of my account, even though it has never been flagged by a community note, being allowed?" he asked.

In an X post in February 2025, the Minister had alleged that social media platforms are deliberately restricting the visibility/reach of posts critical of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah and the BJP regime.

In another post dated April 2, 2026, he spoke about the recent development where the US Trade Representative's 2026 National Trade Estimate Report said that since 2021, U.S. firms have been subject to an increasing number of takedown requests from Indian authorities for content and user accounts related to issues that appear politically motivated.

Siddaramaiah has no moral right to talk about family politics: HDK

The Hindu Bureau
MYSURU

Union Minister for Heavy Industries and Steel H.D. Kumaraswamy on Friday reacted sharply to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's reported remarks on family politics involving former Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda's family, and said the Chief Minister did not have any moral authority to speak on the issue.

After Mr Siddaramaiah's elder son died prematurely, which is unfortunate, Mr. Kumaraswamy questioned why his younger son, a doctor, was pushed into politics – whether it was for public service or otherwise.

'Political dealings'

Fielding queries from reporters in Pandavapura, near here, the Union Minister alleged that Mr. Siddaramaiah's son was engaged in "political dealings" instead of addressing people's problems. He pointed out that Deputy Chief Minister's family members too were in politics. Similiarly, There were several families with two or three family members being legislators.

H.D. Kumaraswamy

Speaking on the tenure of Mr. Siddaramaiah, Mr. Kumaraswamy claimed that the Chief Minister intends to continue in the post "permanently".

Mr. Kumaraswamy said Mr. Siddaramaiah is not looking to continue as Chief Minister merely till the remainder of the present term, but is aiming to return to the post even after the next Assembly elections in 2028.

Referring to Mr. Siddaramaiah's recent statement that he will remain in politics till his last breath, the JD (S) leader recalled Mr. Siddaramaiah's reported statement in the Legislature that he would quit electoral politics after the 2013 Assembly elections. "After experiencing power, he now wants to remain Chief Minister permanently," Mr Kumaraswamy remarked.

He said the results of the bypolls in Davangere South and Bagalkot Assembly constituencies would go either way, but the people's opinion on the Congress government will be known only during the next Assembly elections.

HC directs govt. to appoint 3 candidates as works inspector despite abolition of posts

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The High Court of Karnataka has directed the State government to appoint three candidates, who were selected to the posts of work inspector in the Department of Municipal Administration (DMA) in 2017, even though the government in 2021 had abolished the cadre of work inspectors under the DMA in 2021.

A Division Bench comprising Justice D.K. Singh and Justice S. Rachaiah issued the directions while allowing an appeal filed by Harish Kumar H.P. of Kanakapura in Bengaluru South district, Vishwanath of Yelaburga in Koppal district and Hampanna Kolakar of Basavana Bagewadi in Vijayapura district.

The appellants had challenged a single judge's February 24, 2022 order of dismissing their petition, in which they had questioned the government's November 4, 2021 endorsement denying appointments to the petitioners

citing abolition of the posts.

The petitioners had successfully cleared the competitive examination conducted by the Karnataka Public Service Commission in 2016 for 211 posts of work inspector. Their names appeared in the final select list published on September 16, 2017, and they had secured more than 25% marks.

Meanwhile, the government withheld appointment process in the guise of proposal to abolish various posts, including these posts in 2019. However, the government subsequently had told the court in an earlier proceedings that it would issue appointment letters only to those who have secured 25% of marks. The government had also told the court that in the event of abolition of these posts the candidates, who had secured more than 25% marks would be merged with equivalent cadres.

Later, the government in 2021 issued an order abolishing 1,694 posts across various departments, including 380 posts of work inspector in the DMA, excluding the then Bruhat Bangalore Mahanagara Palike.

'Legitimate'

Following this, the petitioners had approached the court after the DMA refused their representation for appointment letters citing abolition of the posts contrary to its earlier assurance to the court for appointing those who had secured more than 25% marks. However, the single judge had dismissed their petitions.

"Though mere inclusion in the select list does not confer an indefeasible right to appointment, the petitioners have a legitimate expectation grounded in the prior conduct and explicit assurance of the government," the Bench observed.

Cannot override

The Bench also held that the cadre of works inspector, created under the Karnataka Municipal Corporation (Common Recruitment of Officers and Employees) Rules, 2011, a statutory rules, cannot be overridden by an executive order. Senior Counsel Lakshmi Narayana, appearing for the petitioners, argued that the cadre of work inspector was created under the statutory rules that cannot be overridden by an administrative order.

While directing the government to issue appointment orders to them within two months, the Bench said that if the 2011 Rules were eventually amended to abolish the cadre of work inspector, the government may merge the petitioners' posts into an equivalent cadre.

Five from State find place in AICC council

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Five leaders from Karnataka have found a place in an advisory council for the minority department constituted by the All India Congress Committee (AICC).

Rajya Sabha member Syed Naseer Hussain, former minister K. Rahman Khan, Energy Minister K.J. George, Housing and Minorities Affairs Minister B.Z. Zameer Ahmad and MLA N.A. Haris were appointed as members of the advisory council, according to a communication from AICC general secretary K.C. Venugopal.

The 60-member council brings together a cross-section of senior party figures, former ministers and sitting legislators with long-standing associations with minority affairs and broader Congress politics.

The council's constitution has been approved by Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge.

Santosh Hegde rushed to hospital

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Former Lokayukta N. Santosh Hegde collapsed at an event after delivering a speech in the city on Friday and was subsequently hospitalised.

The incident occurred at Kondajji Basappa Hall, where a felicitation programme for P.G.R. Sindhia was being held. Mr. Hegde, who was one of the guests at the event, suddenly took ill and collapsed on the stage just after speaking. Those present at the venue rushed to his aid and shifted him to the nearby Manipal Hospital on MIllers' Road.

Assembly Speaker U.T. Khader, who was present at the programme, took Mr. Hegde to the hospital in his car. Hospital authorities said he is doing fine and was treated in the Emergency Room and was later discharged.

State rolls out free reading glasses scheme, starting with Yadgir

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The State government has partnered with Restoring-Vision to roll out a programme aimed at providing free vision screening and reading glasses to citizens aged 40 years and above across the State, beginning with Yadgir district.

The initiative, implemented through Ayushman Arogya Mandir Sub Centres, marks the first such collaboration in India to address presbyopia at scale at the sub-centre level. In the first phase, about one lakh reading glasses will be distributed free of cost across 216 government health facilities in Yadgir, covering hospitals, Community Health Centres, Primary Health Centres and sub-centres.

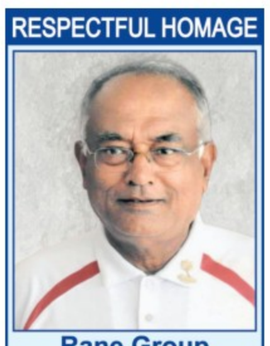
The programme is expected to benefit nearly 3.28 lakh residents aged 40 and above in the district. Officials said Yadgir was chosen for the pilot as the initial supply is sufficient to meet the district's near-vision correction needs.

Presbyopia, an age-related decline in the ability to focus on nearby objects, is a leading cause of vision impairment. Health officials estimate that nearly 28% of Yadgir's population is affected by the condition, which can be corrected with reading glasses.

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH

RESPECTFUL HOMAGE



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deeply mourns the passing of
V. RAMACHANDRAN
Former Director &
Executive Vice Chairman
Kar Mobiles Limited
Passed away
on 2nd April 2026
We remember his invaluable contributions and guidance over two decades of service

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Division	IFT Number	Amount put to Tender / EMD Amount	Last date & time for Submission of Tender	Date &Time for Opening of Tender
North West-1	BWSSB/EE (NW-1)/PB/ 6763/2025-26 Date: 31.03.2026	Rs. 22,98,882/- / Rs.50,000/-	10.04.2026 upto 5:00 PM	13.04.2026 after 5.15 PM

Sd/- Executive Engineer (North West -1)
The detail regarding the tender & participation in the e-procurement portal process can be obtained by logging on to https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in For further details contact the abovesigned office during working hours.
DIPR/CP/42/SSC/2026-27

KARNATAKA POWER TRANSMISSION CORPORATION LIMITED
(CIN: U40109KA1999SGC025521)
No: SEE/Tr(Op)/Circle-(South)/EE(O)/AEE-1/F-281(87)/26-27/32-33 Date: 02.04.2026
TENDER NOTIFICATION (Through KPPP mode only)
KPTCL invites bid against enquiry no. KPTCL/SEE/TR(Op)/ Circle(S)/EE(O)/AEE-1/25-26/EPR-16/Call-5 Dated 31.10.2025 for the work of Increasing the Vertical Clearance of existing 66kV Overhead EHT line crossings at Railway km No. 03/800-900 Double circuit between Channasandra (CSDR) - Yelahanka (YNK) Railway station in Hoody Division, Bengaluru under DCW basis (on TTK on Percentage basis) in the Tr(Op), South-Circle, Bengaluru.
The Bids will be received through E-Procurement mode only. The detailed notification regarding the subject tenders can be got by logging on to https://kptcl.karnataka.gov.in with hyperlink 'E Procurement KPTCL' or to https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in on or after 04.04.2026. Other details can be obtained from the office of the undersigned.
Sd/- Superintending Engineer, (Ele.),
Transmission (Operation) Circle-South, KPTCL,
Office Complex, Ground Floor, A.R. Circle, Bengaluru-09

From Page One

Karnataka tops under 'Namo Drone Didi Yojana'

As per information by Minister of State for Civil Aviation Murlidhar Mohol to a question in the Lok Sabha during the ongoing Budget session of Parliament a total of 1,094 SHG members have been trained as drone pilots in the country.

Across India, Prayagraj in Uttar Pradesh was ranked first, with 16 members of SHGs. The NDDY was launched by the Central government for providing 15,000 drones to the Women SHGs with an outlay of ₹1,261 crore for the period from 2023-24 to 2025-26. "The NDDY was approved by the government as a Central Sector Scheme with an outlay of ₹1,261 crore for the period from the financial year 2023-24 to FY 2025-26. The scheme aims to provide 15,000 agricultural drones to select women SHGs," the Minister said in his reply.

He added that in 2023, 1,094 drones were distributed to SHGs by lead fertilizer companies using their internal resources. Out of these 1,094 drones, 500 were distributed under the NDDY scheme.

According to the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, 15 days drone pilot training for one of the members of SHGs and five days drone assistant training for other member/family members of SHGs is provided as a part of the drone package.

(With inputs by Sathish G.T. from Shivamogga)

Modi's roadshow energises NDA campaign in Puducherry

The BJP-led NDA focuses on retaining power in the Union Territory, where it has been in alliance with the AINRC since 2021; Assembly election to the 30-member House is scheduled for April 9

Rajesh B. Nair
PUDUCHERRY

Senior BJP leader and Prime Minister Narendra Modi gave a leg-up to the National Democratic Alliance's campaign for the Puducherry Assembly election by undertaking a major roadshow in the Union Territory on Friday.

Accompanied by Chief Minister N. Rangasamy, founder of the All India N.R. Congress (AINRC), and Home Minister A. Namassivayam, Mr. Modi travelled in an open vehicle along a one-kilometre stretch from Ajantha Signal to Raja Theatre junction.

BJP Puducherry president and Raj Bhavan constituency candidate V. P. Ramalingam also joined the roadshow.

PM Narendra Modi along with Puducherry CM N. Rangasamy and Home Minister A. Namassivayam. B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

Large crowds, comprising BJP supporters and members of the public, lined the route, showering flower petals and raising slogans in support of the Prime Minister. The atmosphere turned celebratory at several points, with chants of "Modi, Modi" echoing across the town, which was decked up with BJP flags.

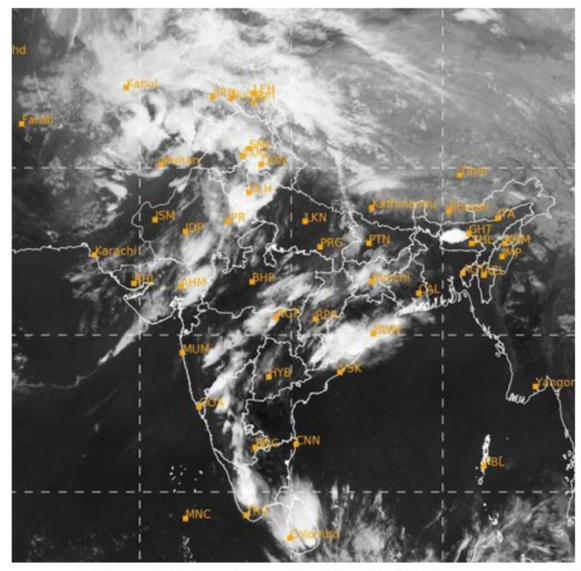
After winding up the roadshow, Mr. Modi briefly interacted with Mr. Rangasamy before departing from Puducherry Airport.

Mr. Modi had earlier visited Puducherry on March 1 to inaugurate various development projects. Friday's visit underlines the BJP-led NDA's focus on retaining power in the Union Territory, where it has been in alliance with the AINRC since 2021.

For the April 9 Assembly election to the 30-member House, the alliance has retained its previous seat-sharing arrangement: AINRC is contesting 16 seats, BJP 10, while AIADMK and LJK are contesting two seats each.

WEATHERWATCH

Rainfall, temperature & air quality in select metros yesterday



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 18.15 HRS)

Forecast for Saturday: Heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, Kerala and Mahe. Thunderstorm with lightning/gusty winds likely at isolated places over Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Tripura, Jharkhand, Odisha, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Karaikal

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	—	35.0	26.2	Kozhikode	9	34.3	25.6
Ahmedabad	—	34.2	24.1	Kurnool	—	39.6	26.4
Aizawl	—	34.2	18.9	Lucknow	—	35.9	26.4
Allahabad	—	35.8	23.6	Madurai	—	39.0	25.6
Bengaluru	—	33.6	22.8	Mangaluru	—	33.9	24.5
Bhopal	0.2	36.0	21.0	Mumbai	—	32.8	22.0
Bhubaneswar	—	38.7	25.0	Mysuru	—	34.0	20.0
Chandigarh	—	31.7	19.9	New Delhi	—	33.7	22.4
Chennai	—	35.7	25.1	Patna	—	39.4	25.7
Coimbatore	—	36.4	24.2	Port Blair	—	33.3	25.2
Dehradun	—	32.2	18.3	Puducherry	—	33.7	24.5
Gangtok	0.3	22.5	15.0	Pune	84	32.8	17.2
Goa	—	33.8	23.8	Raipur	—	38.5	25.0
Guwahati	—	31.8	21.8	Ranchi	—	35.8	22.3
Hubballi	—	34.0	21.0	Shillong	—	25.5	14.8
Hyderabad	—	37.2	24.6	Shimla	—	22.8	13.4
Imphal	—	30.3	23.1	Srinagar	—	17.3	11.2
Jaipur	—	32.2	23.2	Thiruvananthapuram	—	35.4	26.2
Kochi	15	32.6	24.2	Tiruchi	—	38.8	25.4
Kohima	—	22.4	16.0	Vijayawada	—	37.4	25.0
Kolkata	—	38.4	26.2	Visakhapatnam	—	33.2	26.6

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO_2	NO_2	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	.59	..65	64	70	...144	
Bengaluru	...6	..44	26	75	...104	
Chennai	...5	5	34	35	59	
Delhi	.27	..24	38	... 262	...381	
Hyderabad	.19	..18	35	69	95	
Kolkata	...7	..49	36	59	65	
Lucknow	...8	..43	50	98	...121	
Mumbai	.11	..69	46	72	...110	
Pune	..—	..82	92	... 117	...118	
Visakhapatnam	.35	..33	20	37	94	

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 325 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Madikeri, Karnataka recorded a healthy AQI score of 21

Air Quality Code: Poor Moderate Good (Readings indicate average AQI)

SO_2: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO_2: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

Gaganyaan: ISRO's Mission MITRA commences in Leh

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

As part of the Gaganyaan mission, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is undertaking Mission MITRA (Mapping of Interoperable Traits and Response Assessment) in Leh.

Mission MITRA, a first-of-its-kind team behavioral study designed by ISRO and the India Air Force's (IAF) Institute of Aerospace Medicine, commenced on April 2 and will go on till April 9.

ISRO said that the crew safety and performance are the most critical elements of all human space flight missions.

"The ability of crew to communicate effectively, adapt to stress, maintain psychological resilience and support one another determines the success and safety of any mission. Analog missions conducted under controlled yet realistic conditions are utilised to understand how crew perform under challenging conditions," ISRO said.

Towards this ISRO has undertaken mission MITRA in Leh where the altitude is approximately 3,500 metres. Besides Leh also has the environmental conditions of hypoxia, low temperature, and isolation as a natural analog for spaceflight operations.

Hubballi tense after youth is beaten up

The Hindu Bureau
HUBBALLI

A Muslim youth was beaten up over allegations of "love jihad" and handed over to the police, while his family members and that of the girl allegedly attacked each other.

Subsequently, members of various Hindutva outfits staged a protest in Hubballi until late in the evening on Friday.

Sameer Mulla, a gym trainer from Vijayanagar in Hubballi, was accused of exploiting a young Hindu girl and was beaten up by members of SSK Samaj (Pattegar community), to which the girl belongs, on Friday.

However, the youth's family members claimed that both Mulla and the girl were in a relationship for the last three years and her parents were aware of the matter.

On Friday, Sameer was reportedly taken out from his home by a group of people from the SSK community along with members of Hindutva organisations, beaten up, and then handed over to the police.

Meanwhile, a video clip has surfaced, in which the girl has accused the youth of exploiting her after giving her a sedative drug. The accused alleged that her family forced her to make the accusation.

The development resulted in tension around Old Hubballi Police Station, where a large number of people, including Hindutva activists, staged a protest demanding stringent action to curb the "menace of love jihad".

CINEMA ❖ ARTS ❖ EVENTS

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Dramatisation & Direction : TV Varadharajen
சங்கத்தமும்மூர்த்திகள்
SANGEETHA MUMMOORTHIGAL
இசை சங்கமம்
Venue CHOWDIAH MEMORIAL HALL
Malleswaram, Bengaluru 560003
FOR BOOKINGS AND MORE DETAILS, CONTACT 9845472278
Online booking : bookmyshow

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public is hereby notified that my client **Mr.Ramji Kanji Ravariya** has lost/misplaced the original General Power of Attorney Doc No. **HSK-4-00853-2020-21 CD NO. HSKD1148** dated 27/11/2020, Sale Agreement Doc No.**HSK-1-07343-2020-21 CD NO. HSKD1148** dated 27/11/2020, General Power of Attorney **HSK-4-01045-2020-21 CD NO. HSKD1187** dated 22/01/202 & Sale Agreement **HSK-1-09600-2020-21 CD NO. HSKD1187** dated 22/01/2021 in favour of Mr.Ramji Kanji Ravariya regarding this my client have given a police complaint Report No.**2137028/2026**, on 02/04/2026
For the said original documents kindly contact the undersigned within 05 (Five) days from the date of this notice.
Place: Bangalore
Date: 03.04.2026
Sd/-
Tejas G Vernekar, Advocate,
Verna Law Firm
No.84, Unit No.1102, 11th Floor,
Barton Centre, M G Road,
Bangalore-560 001.
Mobile: 99163 10226.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public is hereby notified that my client **Smt.Premuben Rajesh Menat** has lost/misplaced the original Agreement of Sale **Doc No. HSK-1-02860-2020-21 CD NO. HSKD1066** dated 10/08/2020 & Doc No. General Power of Attorney **HSK-4-00315-2020-21 CD NO. HSKD1066** dated 10/08/2020 & Doc No. Adikruta Gnapana **LNDCR-31/2021-22** dated 04/07/2023 in favour of Smt.Premuben Rajesh Menat regarding this my client have given a police complaint Report **No.2137020/2026,** on 02/04/2026
For the said original documents kindly contact the undersigned within 05 (Five) days from the date of this notice.
Place: Bangalore
Date: 03.04.2026
Sd/-
Tejas G Vernekar, Advocate,
Verna Law Firm
No.84, Unit No.1102, 11th Floor,
Barton Centre, M G Road,
Bangalore-560 001.
Mobile: 99163 10226.

SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY
Tender Notice No. Y/E.29/2025-26/109 Dtd 26.03.2026
The undersigned, on behalf of the President of India, invites E-Tender for the following work.

SN	Name of work	Approx.Value
1	Extension of PF No. 1 to 450 meters with High level platform, platform shelter and other amenity works at MSS.	Rs. 6,97,053/-

Last date for Submission of bids : **Upto 11.00 hrs on 16.04.2026**
For details log on : **www.ireps.gov.in**
Senior Divisional Electrical Engineer/G/ Mysuru
PUB/1/AAD360/PRB/SWR/2026-27
Download the **RailOne** app. RailOne is the all-in-one railway app by Indian Railways. Passengers can book reserved tickets, unreserved tickets, platform tickets, and season passes, check PNR status, order food, and access many more services at their fingertips. Use digital payment to book unreserved tickets through **RailOne** app, and enjoy up to a **3%** discount.
South Western Railway - SWR @SWRLY @SWRAILWAYHQ @sw_railways

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public is hereby notified that my client **Mr.Vinod Vasta** Vaid has lost/misplaced the original Agreement of Sale **Doc No. HSK-1-07341-2020-21 CD NO. HSKD1148** dated 27/11/2020 & Doc No. General Power of Attorney **HSK-4-00852-2020-21 CD NO. HSKD1148** dated 27/11/2020, in favour of Mr.Vinod Vasta Vaid Regarding this my client have given a police complaint Report No.**2137018/2026**, on 02/04/2026
For the said original documents kindly contact the undersigned within 05 (Five) days from the date of this notice.
Place: Bangalore
Date: 03.04.2026
Sd/-
Tejas G Vernekar, Advocate,
Verna Law Firm
No.84, Unit No.1102, 11th Floor,
Barton Centre, M G Road,
Bangalore-560 001.
Mobile: 99163 10226.

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LEGAL NOTICE

SUIT SUMMONS
IN THE COURT OF THE III ADDL.DIST. JUDGE: GUNTUR, ANDHRA PRADESH
O.S. No. 469 / 2016
Between :
Kurra Leelavathi & Others ...Plaintiffs
And
Jonnalagadda Samadhanam & Others. ...Defendants
To,
D-12: Kurra Siva Ratnamma, W/o. Late Seetha Ramaiah,
D-13: Kurra Hemanth,S/o.Late Seetha Ramaiah,
D-15: Kurva Vijayasri,D/o.Late Seetharamaiah,D-12,D-13 & D-15 are R/o.No.109, 10th Cross, 2nd main Road Kaveripura, Kamakshi Palya, Bangalore, Karnataka state. You are here by informed that you have to appear before the above Hon'ble court on **10-4-2026** at **10.30A.M.** either in person or through your advocate. In Case of the non-appearance before the above Court, the matter will be adjudicated in your absence.
(By order of the Court)
N. SRINIVASA RAO,
Advocate for Plaintiffs,
Guntur (A.P), Cell:9849569156

WEST CENTRAL RAILWAY
COMMERCIAL DEPARTMENT
No JBP/C/NFR/E-Tender/26, Date 09.03.2026
DRM (Commercial) Jabalpur, on behalf of president of India invited e-Tender for the earning and leasing contracts from Jabalpur Division. Details are as under:- **SN :** 1, **Category :** Misc-Static-Services -Static General, **Tender Notice No. & Date :** MSS-JBP-JBP-STGen-121-26-1, **Assets Details :** For Provision of Sanitised Quality Bedroll Services On Demand - On Payment Basis For Non-AC Sleeper Coaches of Trains Under Jabalpur Division, **Lot End Date time :** 07-04-26, 15:30:00, **SN:** 2, **Category:** Advertising -Out of Home, **Tender Notice No. & Date :** ADVT-JBP-KMZ-OH-147-26-1, **Assets Details:** Installation and Maintenance of Gantry Gates, at Various Locations in Circulating and Non-Circulating Areas of Katni Murwara Railway Station for Display of Commercial Advertisements and Railway Information for a Period of Five (05) Years., **Lot End Date time :** 08-04-26, 15:30:00, **SN:** 3, **Category:** Advertising -Out of Home, **Tender Notice No. & Date :** ADVT-JBP-KTE-OH-146-26-1, **Assets Details :** Installation and Maintenance of Gantry Gates at Various Locations in Circulating and Non-Circulating Areas of Katni Railway Station for Display of Commercial Advertisements and Railway Information for a Period of Five (05) Years., **Lot End Date time :** 08-04-26, 15:40:00, **SN :** 4, **Category :** Advertising -Out of Home, **Tender Notice No. & Date :** ADVT-JBP-PPI-OH-145-26-1, **Assets Details :** Installation and Maintenance of Gantry Gates at Various Locations in Circulating and Non-Circulating Areas of Pipariya Railway Station for Display of Commercial Advertisements and Railway Information for a Period of Five (05) Years., **Lot End Date time :** 08-04-26, 15:50:00, **SN :** 5, **Category :** Advertising -Out of Home, **Tender Notice No. & Date :** ADVT-JBP-REWA-OH-148-26-1, **Assets Details:** Installation and Maintenance of Gantry Gates at Various Locations in Circulating and Non-Circulating Areas of Rewa Railway Station for Display of Commercial Advertisements and Railway Information for a Period of Five (05) Years., **Lot End Date time :** 08-04-26, 16:00:00, **SN :** 6, **Category :** Advertising -Train Exterior (Below Window), **Tender Notice No. & Date :** ADVT-EBW-155494-3-26-1, **Assets Details :** Space below the windows in Train No. 22189/90 JBP-REWA &. 11265/66 JBP-ABKP & 11651/52 JBP-SGRL is proposed to be utilized for commercial advertisement through vinyl wrapping. The total gross advertising area (in square meters) shall be determined based on actual site measurement and may vary depending upon the availability of space suitable for advertisement, **Lot End Date time :** 08-04-26, 16:10:00, **SN :** 7, **Category :** Advertising -Train Exterior Exterior (Below Window), **Tender Notice No. & Date :** ADVT-EBW-288200-1-26-1, **Assets Details :** Space below the windows in Train, No. 11701/02 is proposed to be utilized for commercial advertisement through vinyl wrapping. The total gross advertising area (in square meters) shall be determined based on actual site measurement and may vary depending upon the availability of space suitable for advertisement., **Lot End Date time :** 08-04-26, 16:20:00, **SN :** 8, **Category :** Advertising -Train Exterior (Below Window), **Tender Notice No. & Date :** ADVT-EBW-127872-4-26-1, **Assets Details :** Space below the windows in Train No. 11705/06 is proposed to be utilized for commercial advertisement through vinyl wrapping. The total gross advertising area (in square meters) shall be determined based on actual site measurement and may vary depending upon the availability of space suitable for advertisement., **Lot End Date time :** 08-04-26, 16:30:00, **SN :** 9, **Category :** Misc-Static-Services -Digital Mobile Charging Kiosks, **Tender Notice No. & Date :** MSS-JBP-JBP-MCK-122-26-1, **Assets Details:** Installation, maintenance and advertising of Mobile Charging Kiosks., **Lot End Date time:** 08-04-26, 15:30:00, **SN:**10, **Category:** Misc-Static-Services -Static General, **Tender Notice No. & Date :** MSS-JBP-MML-STGen-120-26-1, **Assets Details :** For allotment and Development of open space near Madanmahal. Railway Station for establishing of sports and turf court and recreation facility, **Lot End Date time:** 10-04-26, 12:30:00, **SN:** 11, **Category :** (Parcel-SLR), **Tender Notice No. & Date:** 12427-SLR-F1-REWA-ANVT-26-1, **Assets Details:** Parcel Space in SLR Coach (Single Compartment), **Lot End Date time:** 16-04-26, 13:30:00,Prospective bidders are requested to visit the E-Tender Leasing module on the IREPS website (www.ireps.gov.in). Lot-wise details are available under the above catalog. E-bidding information is also available on the notice board of the Divisional Railway Manager (Commercial), West Central Railway, Jabalpur.
(Sd.)
Division Railway Manager (Commercial),
West Central Railway, JBP
स्वच्छ भारत अभियान एक कदम स्वच्छता की ओर

SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY
Publication of Tender Notice
COMML/MYS/04/2026 Dated:27.03.2026
The undersigned, on behalf of the President of India, invites E-Tender for the following work.

Sl.No.	Item of Work
1.	Tender invited for appointment of halt agent at Chandagiri Koppal Halt Station situated between Mysuru & Bengaluru section over Mysuru Division for a period of five years.

Last date for Submission of bids : **Upto 15.00 hrs on 12.05.2026**
For details log on : **www.swr.indianrailways.gov.in**
Senior Divisional Commercial Manager, Mysuru
PUB/4/AAD360/PRB/SWR/2026-27
Download the **RailOne** app. RailOne is the all-in-one railway app by Indian Railways. Passengers can book reserved tickets, unreserved tickets, platform tickets, and season passes, check PNR status, order food, and access many more services at their fingertips. Use digital payment to book unreserved tickets through **RailOne** app, and enjoy up to a **3%** discount.
South Western Railway - SWR @SWRLY @SWRAILWAYHQ @sw_railways

SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY
Publication of Tender notice No. CAO/CN/BNC/179/2026 dated 30.03.2026
The undersigned, on behalf of the President of India, invites E-Tender for the following work.

Item of Work	Approx.Value
Construction of Road Over Bridge in lieu of LC no. 97 @ Km:121/600-700 as 1x36 m Composite Girder (Railway portion) + 3x18.71m PSC Girder (Kirangoor end) + 6x18.71m PSC Girder (Rampur end) + 3x28m PSC Girder (Rampur end) + RCC retaining wall (approach portion) and proposed Limited height subway at km:121/540 as 1x5x2.5m RCC box Between Panadavapura and Srirangapattana stations (Composite work). **(Tender Ref. No. ROB-LC-97-PANP-S-R)**	Rs. 37,59,30,128/-

Last date for Submission of bids : **Upto 15.00 hrs on 21.04.2026**
For details log on : **www.ireps.gov.in**
Deputy Chief Engineer/Construction/Works, Bengaluru Cantonment
PUB/8/AAD360/PRB/SWR/2026-27
Download the **RailOne** app. RailOne is the all-in-one railway app by Indian Railways. Passengers can book reserved tickets, unreserved tickets, platform tickets, and season passes, check PNR status, order food, and access many more services at their fingertips. Use digital payment to book unreserved tickets through **RailOne** app, and enjoy up to a **3%** discount.
South Western Railway - SWR @SWRLY @SWRAILWAYHQ @sw_railways

SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY
E-(IREPS) TENDER NOTICE NO. 52 UBL 2025-26 Date: 27.03.2026
The undersigned, on behalf of the President of India, invites E-Tender (IREPS) for the following work.

SN	Name of work	Approx.Value
1	Hubballi Division:Gadag-Hotagi Section: W beam metal crash barrier alongside of track for a length of 5.65 Km under Assistant Divisional Engineer/ Vijayapura Jurisdiction	Rs. 2,32,80,770.00
2	Hubballi Division:Proposed Construction of NEW office building for Senior Section Engineer/Electrical/Mechanical depot at Gadag (GDG).	Rs. 68,41,143.00
3	Hubballi Division: Augmentation of Mechanized Laundry at (UBL) Hubballi Railway Station	Rs. 2,51,18,618.00
4	Hubballi Division: Providing height gauge at the approaches of bow string arch road over bridge girders at ROB no.2A between Londa-Gunji (LD-GNJ) stations, ROB no.121A (3rd gate) between Desur-Belgaum (DUR- BGM) stations, Road Over Bridge no.126A (BGM yard DUR end, single lane) & 126A (BGM yard BGM end single lane) between Desur-Nagsamudram (DUR- NGM) stations, ROB no.164/A (RBG yard) between Raybag-Chinchali (RBG-CNC) stations and ROB no.181B (KUD yard) between Chinchali- Kudachi (CNC-KUD) stations; all in Londa-Miraj(LD-MRJ) section under Senior Section Engineer/Bridges/Belagavi jurisdiction (Total no. of bridges 6 numbers)	Rs. 81,44,310.00
5	Hubballi Division: Supply of ballast at Shedbal Depot in Senior Divisional Engineer/West/Hubballi Jurisdiction.	Rs. 4,32,80,092.00
6.	Hubballi Division:Cleaning of water tanks, GLR's and Over Head tanks in colony and service building, cleaning and maintenance of existing sewer lines in office and staff quarters and valve man to operate valve in Assistant Divisional Engineer/Belagavi BGM) and Assistant Divisional Engineer/Castlerock Jurisdiction for a period of two years.	Rs. 1,52,32,949.00

Last date for Submission of bids : **Upto 11.00 hrs on 29.04.2026**
For details log on : **www.ireps.gov.in**
Senior Divisional Engineer/Co-Ordination, Hubballi
PUB/6/AAD360/PRB/SWR/2026-27
Download the **RailOne** app. RailOne is the all-in-one railway app by Indian Railways. Passengers can book reserved tickets, unreserved tickets, platform tickets, and season passes, check PNR status, order food, and access many more services at their fingertips. Use digital payment to book unreserved tickets through **RailOne** app, and enjoy up to a **3%** discount.
South Western Railway - SWR @SWRLY @SWRAILWAYHQ @sw_railways

Fear of the foreign

The FCRA amendments are unfair in principle and procedure

The Centre wants to restrict foreign contributions to individuals and organisations in India, but intends to do so in a selective and opaque manner. A fresh set of amendments to the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, or FCRA, now temporarily stalled due to protests, is an attempt by the Centre to empower itself to arbitrarily take control of assets owned by recipients of foreign contributions. Introduced in the Lok Sabha on March 25, 2026, the Bill to amend the FCRA proposes a comprehensive statutory framework for a new "designated authority" to seize, manage, and dispose of assets of organisations that lose their FCRA licence. Cloaked in the rhetoric of national security and foreign interventions, the move smacks of bad faith, or even worse, a devious scheme to snatch assets built through legal means. Once an FCRA registration ceases to exist, the designated authority can take control of assets built using foreign funds – schools, hospitals, places of worship – and use them. This process is proposed to be automatic and instantaneous upon the discontinuation of the FCRA status, requiring no judicial determination or adjudicatory process. In effect, the Centre that grants FCRA permission can decide to withdraw that permission, and benefit from its own decision. This is unfair in both principle and procedure, and Christian groups that run numerous health and educational institutions are particularly concerned, given that they may have received contributions from abroad

The Bill has been postponed for now, but the government has no plans to abandon it. The FCRA was first enacted in 1976, and reenacted in 2010 during the UPA regime and amended in 2020 under Narendra Modi – progressively tightening the receipt and use of foreign funds. It is notable that state policy seeks foreign money in a range of domains – from infrastructure to technology, and entertainment to real estate. Regulatory regimes can be credible only when they are transparent and even-handed. That is not the case with the FCRA restrictions. Rajya Sabha MP John Brittas said his parliamentary questions regarding FCRA cancellations, non-renewals, and related data had been disallowed since 2024. That leaves one with the reasonable assumption that the government allows only some to receive foreign funds. That built-in favouritism apart, the design of the proposed legislation violates the principles of natural justice. The assets built legally with foreign funds before an organisation loses its FCRA clearance cannot justly be subject to seizure under any subsequent regulatory action. The Centre must rethink its approach on this issue and ensure that any regulations on foreign funds it introduces are fair, transparent, and steer clear of what exists on the ground.

Lessons unlearned

Steps to manage crowds must be taught to organisers, police personnel

Another stampede and another probe. India seems to have learned little about crowd management despite a series of stampedes in recent months. At the Sheetla Mata temple in Bihar's Nalanda district on Tuesday, nine persons died, eight of them women, and a dozen were injured. On the occasion of the last Monday of the month of Chaitra, more than 10,000 people came to the temple, which typically sees only a few hundred devotees. Police say they had no forewarning of a large gathering, though many view their absence as a consequence of the bandobust requirements for the Nalanda University convocation, which was attended by the President of India that day. Priests had allegedly taken money for the special darshan and allowed the bribe givers through the exit, which became clogged. The entrance was practically blocked as people tried to get in. One death from a likely fall was enough to trigger panic. What happened was clearly avoidable, as are all stampedes that routinely occur in India. For instance, too many people trying to enter a packed stadium is a well-studied disaster scenario and lessons have been learned from it in many countries. However, the RCB victory celebration in Bengaluru, in June 2025, led to an avoidable buildup of the crowd in the city, which was then led into the already full stadium.

Crowd science and crowd management are well-defined subjects in academia in the developed world. While crowd science deals largely with planned gatherings, there is a whole body of literature on unplanned, spontaneous gatherings, which are often marked by emotionally charged crowds, such as celebrity sightings and religious events. The latter is typical in India and is driven by digital communities. Crowd management combines quantitative techniques with qualitative methods and theories. For instance, the science stipulates that if there are more than five people per square metre, movement will be constrained, requiring intervention. Qualitative methods, for example, include ruses such as installing mirrors to make people see themselves, reinforcing individual identity, which can be lost and lead to irrational, panic-stricken behaviour. Contrary to popular impression, expressive crowds gathering for religious reasons are open to leadership and guidance. In India, the police learn crowd control on the field and through experience shared by veterans, who discuss using mobile loudspeakers to calm crowds and maintain order through clear instructions. Crowd control and management must become subjects of serious academic study so that measures to prevent accidents are commonly known and implemented across India.

Kerala's development decade

V.K. Ramachandran

Vice-Chairperson, Kerala State Planning Board

The decade from 2016 to 2026 has been a period of rapid and unprecedented economic development in the State of Kerala. These changes have been achieved despite the financial constraints imposed on the State by the Union Government. Kerala has distinguished itself as the only State to sustain a formal planning process, enabling it to significantly increase capital expenditure from 2017 onwards, contrary to the declining trend observed in 18 major States after the dissolution of the Planning Commission.

Kerala's growth rates are comparable to, and in some years higher than, the national average. Every sector of the economy has been put on a new growth path. The share of budgetary funds designated exclusively for people of the Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) has consistently exceeded the share of SC/STs in the State. Since 2016, administrative approval for more than 1,200 infrastructure projects has been given for projects financed by the innovative new instrument of the Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board (KIIFB). Local governments are now not only instruments of people's participation but also catalysts of income-growth.

Kerala Bank was created by consolidating district cooperative banks into a single institution – a move that has strengthened financial stability, expanded rural credit, and opened the way for a people-oriented development bank. The heightened role of cooperative establishments can be illustrated with a single standout fact: Kerala is certainly the only State of the Union in which the largest civil construction company is a workers' cooperative.

On education and health

There have been major investments in school infrastructure, teacher development, curriculum renewal, and IT-enabled learning. The State has achieved universal, free elementary education with a zero per cent dropout at the preparatory and middle-school level; the dropout rates among SC/ST students are among India's lowest. Kerala is also India's first fully digital State in school education. In higher and technical education, there have been reforms in governance, curriculum, and institutional structures, along with strong public investment. All these efforts have contributed to improved national rankings for schools, universities, and colleges.

Kerala is internationally recognised for its strong public health performance, with key indicators such as an infant mortality rate of just five per 1,000 live births – better than the United States. Programmes such as the Aardram Mission and Karunya Arogya Suraksha Padhathi have improved the health infrastructure and provided cashless health coverage (up to ₹5 lakh) to over 42 lakh families. The State has expanded services to cover mental health, non-communicable diseases, and e-health. Kerala's handling of the Nipah outbreaks and the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the strengths of the health system.

> Despite a structurally discriminatory federal fiscal architecture, it is a journey marked by unprecedented human development gains and economic growth

In November 2025, the Government of Kerala fulfilled a historic promise to the people when it put an end to extreme poverty. The policy on housing for the poor – and the actual modern, safe, comfortable houses built for the poor – has set, as in other fields, new national standards. By February 2026, over five lakh houses were built under the LIFE Mission.

Women in Kerala have attained high levels of educational attainment, and the highest life expectancy in the country. These outcomes reflect sustained investments in education, health care, nutrition, and social security, complemented by pioneering institutional innovations such as Kudumbashree, which has emerged as a globally recognised model for women's collective empowerment, livelihoods, and local economic development. Child health is among the best in India, and the Gender Budget exceeds one-fifth of the Annual Plan outlay.

Social justice

Reflecting plan priorities, the new Elderly Budget, which takes up 19% of the State Budget for 2026-27, mainstreams senior citizens' needs across planning, pensions, health care, and local governance. Over 75% of the elderly are covered by pension schemes. Allocations to schemes for persons with disabilities have more than doubled between 2016 and 2026.

The Public Distribution System (PDS) operates as a near-universal safety net, covering nearly 95 lakh ration card-holding households. The State actively intervenes in markets through its civil supplies network in order to maintain low food-price inflation well below the national average.

Human development gains have been used as a springboard for economic growth. Growth in the primary sectors, in industry, infrastructure, and in modern services (including information technology and tourism) has been unprecedented.

The long-held perception that Kerala is unfriendly to industrial growth has been laid to rest. Industry in Kerala has been placed on a new trajectory, driven by the growth of MSMEs and modern industries, the expansion of industrial infrastructure, higher levels of value addition, a turnaround in the performance of public sector undertakings, and modernisation of traditional sectors.

In 2016, commentators said that Kerala had missed the IT bus. In 2025, however, the Global Startup Ecosystem Report reported a 147% increase in ecosystem value in Kerala. Pioneering initiatives, such as recognising Internet access as a basic right and establishing K-FON, have played a significant role.

In an international context in which workers' rights are being undermined, there has been a continuous effort in Kerala to strengthen labour law in favour of workers, including migrant workers. Kerala's policies are a vital counter-narrative to the broader trend of deregulation.

Roads remain the backbone of mobility, and major corridor projects like the Hill Highway, alongside rapid four-laning of National Highways have significantly reduced travel time and strengthened east-west and last-mile connectivity. The Kochi Metro is now operating at scale, while the Kochi Water Metro, India's first of its kind, has demonstrated the viability of clean inland water transport. The commissioning of the Vizhinjam International Deep-Water Seaport in 2024 marked a historic milestone. The road transport corporation has stabilised and improved performance. The State achieved full electrification in 2017 and has since maintained uninterrupted power supply, while reducing technical and commercial losses. Total installed capacity expanded by 50%, with solar power emerging as the most dynamic segment.

Kerala has emerged as a national and international reference point in disaster management, demonstrating effectiveness with respect to immediate and decentralised disaster response and long-term recovery.

Public investment in culture rose sharply, with allocations for culture, museums, archaeology, and heritage recording a 30% increase in 2026-27. The International Film Festival of Kerala, Kochi-Muziris Biennale, International Theatre Festival of Kerala, and IDSFFK expanded in scale and global reach. Plan outlays for sports rose by nearly 160% between 2016-17 and 2026-27, backed by over ₹3,500 crore for infrastructure, including India's first stadium for persons with disabilities.

Fiscal constraint

Kerala's capacity to finance development is constrained by a structurally imbalanced federal fiscal architecture. This imbalance has been reinforced through multiple channels: the centralisation of taxation under the Goods and Services Tax (GST), the withdrawal of assured GST compensation, restrictive borrowing limits, and a growing reliance on conditional and discretionary transfers. The effective share of States in Union tax revenues has been eroded by the expanding use of cesses and surcharges outside the divisible pool, while unconditional Finance Commission transfers have been progressively supplanted by Centrally Sponsored Schemes characterised by rigid design, delays, and partial releases. Together, these developments have weakened the principles of cooperative federalism, reduced fiscal predictability, and narrowed the policy space available to Kerala to sustain public investment alongside their social and development commitments.

Over this decade, the Government of Kerala has sought to create and to present to India and the world a democratic, socially inclusive, participatory, high-growth, and sustainable alternative development policy. That effort must not be permitted to falter.

Iran may be losing the battles, but it might still win the war

Muqtedar Khan

Professor of International Relations at the University of Delaware, a Senior Non-Resident Fellow at the Middle East Policy Council, and the host of the YouTube channel, 'Khanversations', on global affairs

President Donald Trump's address to the nation on the war with Iran on April 1 was brief and offered little that was new. There was anticipation that he might announce either a major escalation – such as a ground war – or declare victory and a ceasefire. Neither happened. Instead, he justified the U.S. strikes as aimed at eliminating Iran's ability to acquire nuclear weapons and project power beyond its borders. He also stated that regime change was not his goal. He claimed that Iran's capabilities were mostly destroyed and that he would target Iran's industrial and power infrastructure. Along with regime change he has now abandoned the freeing of the Strait of Hormuz.

Iran remains resilient

Contrary to Mr. Trump's claims, it is clear that Iran is neither on the verge of collapse nor prepared to concede. On the contrary, Tehran has demonstrated that it retains multiple instruments of retaliation, and the capacity to escalate horizontally – striking back against U.S. bases and its regional adversaries while blocking 25% of the global supply of oil and gas.

From the outset, this writer has argued, in the global media, that the U.S. and Israel will most certainly secure tactical victories. They will be able to degrade Iran's military capabilities and its industrial capacity, and even kill many Iranians, but they would struggle to achieve their broader strategic objectives. These goals – particularly regime change – are unattainable without a large-scale ground invasion that could cause huge American casualties.

Several respected voices reinforce this assessment. Sir Alex Younger, former head of MI6, Ross Harrison of the Middle East Institute, and former Central Intelligence Agency Director John Brennan have all warned that while the U.S. may achieve tactical successes, there is no clear pathway to strategic victory.

Four key factors help explain why Tehran is outperforming expectations in this conflict.

> The U.S. and Israel appear to be struggling strategically as Iran demonstrates resilience and retaliatory capacity

The first is regime resilience and strategic consolidation. The Iranian regime has demonstrated a level of resilience that was significantly underestimated by Israeli and American planners. It has been reported that Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had persuaded Mr. Trump that the regime was very weak and that a massive decapitating attack would trigger a popular uprising and topple it within weeks. Yet, the Iranian regime is surviving, and its most powerful element, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), which functions as both the sword and the shield of the Islamic Republic, has consolidated its hold over Iran's political and military apparatus. By hiding military assets and delegating operational authority down the chain of command, Iran has survived the decapitation strategy. Moreover, by assassinating leaders such as Ali Larijani, Israel has sidelined moderates and empowered hardliners such as Mojtaba Khamenei.

The second is horizontal escalation and economic leverage. Iran has demonstrated the ability to expand the conflict horizontally. Tehran's response to the attack has been to regionalise the war by targeting U.S.-aligned Arab states. Key civilian energy infrastructure has been damaged, tourism has suffered, and their sense of safety has been shaken. By choking the traffic through the Strait of Hormuz, Iran has constrained the global supply of oil and gas, triggering inflationary pressures across the global economy. If these conditions continue to prevail, several Asian economies that depend on the Gulf for energy will face severe economic hardship.

The third is strategic miscalculation in Washington. The growing confusion about the purpose and conduct of the war in Washington is also why Iran is enjoying the upper hand. By privileging Mr. Netanyahu's exhortations over the net assessments of America's own intelligence agencies, Mr. Trump overestimated the effectiveness of air power and underestimated Iran's capacity to endure sustained pressure. It is becoming apparent that pre-war Israeli intelligence was wrong. A recently reported tense phone call between U.S. Vice-President J.D. Vance and Mr. Netanyahu underscores this point, revealing internal U.S. frustration and a growing recognition within the Trump administration that it was manipulated by Israel into this war.

The fourth is allied reluctance and regional blowback. The U.S. is increasingly isolated, with both its allies and regional partners refusing to join its war effort. America's North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies have largely treated this as solely Washington's war. Meanwhile, the U.S.'s partners in the Gulf are deeply uneasy. Having allowed American forces to operate from their territory, they now find themselves exposed to Iranian retaliation. Iran's ability to exert pressure through threats to energy flows and regional stability has given Tehran significant leverage and strategic confidence. Regional states are also signalling declining confidence in the U.S. and exploring alternative pathways such as the Islamabad quadrilateral dialogue (Pakistan, Türkiye, Saudi Arabia and Egypt) to end war.

Tactical losses, strategic advantage

The superior military power of the U.S. and Israel will continue to deliver tactical victories and inflict damage on Iran and its people. However, Iran continues to resist and retaliate. The longer the conflict endures, the more economic strain, global instability, and declining domestic support will weigh on Washington. Iran is simultaneously regaining economic breathing space through oil exports and earning strategic respect across parts of the Global South. If negotiations actually happen, Tehran is likely to enter them with greater confidence and leverage.

If the Iranian regime survives, even a battered and weakened Iran would declare victory – because Mr. Trump's stated goal was unconditional surrender and regime change, and that appears increasingly unlikely.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Going back to the moon

At a time when global humanity is a mute witness to the dance of destruction in West Asia, the sight of the Artemis II spacecraft successfully lifting off with four astronauts from the Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral on its lunar mission was refreshing. The watershed event, on Wednesday, also shows why the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) in the United States continues to be rated as the premier global space agency. This historic event should serve as an eye-opener to the powers that be and to all right-thinking people across the world to engage in the constructive and productive use of science and technology for the betterment of mankind.

B. Suresh Kumar,
Coimbatore

The latest momentum in lunar exploration reflects not just a scientific pursuit but also a strategic contest. Plans for bases, refuelling depots and resource extraction indicate that the moon is rapidly becoming an arena of influence. India's emerging capabilities and cooperative commitments should emphasise peaceful use and shared benefits. Preserving the moon as a global commons is essential to ensure rivalry does not overshadow research.

Aadil Ghulam Bhat,
Kulgam, Jammu and Kashmir

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the postal address.

GROUND ZERO

Family members of Rekha Devi, who died in the stampede, at their house in Mathurapur village in Noorsarai town of Nalanda, Bihar. AMIT BHELARI

In Nalanda, faith turned fatal

On March 31, over 10,000 devotees, mostly women, thronged the Sheetla Mata temple in Nalanda, Bihar. The temple, which normally holds 500-1,000 people, was overwhelmed, triggering a stampede that claimed nine lives. Victims' families allege that priests let devotees enter through the exit gate after collecting money. Amit Bhelari reports on how poor crowd management and inadequate arrangements worsened the tragedy

On March 23, when the results of the Bihar School Examination Board for Class 12 were announced, Kundan Kumar, a 20-year-old resident of Mathurapur village in Noorsarai town in Bihar, was thrilled. He had secured 65%, which meant he achieved a first division. His mother, Rekha Devi, 45, was overjoyed too, and handed him ₹1,000 to buy new books. A few days later, the family visited the Sheetla Mata temple in Maghra village of Nalanda district, about 10 kilometres away, to offer their prayers and celebrate Kundan's success.

According to temple priest Shubham Kumar, 30, Sheetla Mata is considered an avatar of Goddess Durga in Hinduism, as mentioned in the religious text, *Skanda Purana*. The temple, spread over 1.5 acres, attracts devotees who believe that bathing in the cool waters of its pond can help cure skin diseases.

On March 31, the day Kundan's family went to the temple, the crowd grew quickly. It was the last Tuesday of the Chaitra month in the Hindu calendar, believed to be a significant day for spiritual practices, particularly for worshipping Goddess Durga. Locals say that on any regular day, 500-1,000 devotees visit the temple. However, according to the police, more than 10,000 people had gathered for the special prayers that day.

This sudden surge led to a stampede between 9:30 and 10:00 a.m., claiming nine lives, including Rekha Devi's. Eight were women, and one was an unidentified man. Most of the victims were from Nalanda.

Rekha Devi's daughter, 24-year-old Sharmila Kumari, who got married last month, had also accompanied her mother to the temple.

"My mother was the one who used to take care of us because our father is mentally ill," Sharmila says. "He has been undergoing treatment at the Central Institute of Psychiatry [in Kanke, Ranchi] for the last decade." Following the incident, she worries not only about her father, but also her two younger brothers.

Kundan clutches the new books to his chest, weeping. "My mother always encouraged me to study and become a big government officer so that our financial burden would lessen," he says. "All she did was go to pray. She never returned."

Kundan's biggest regret is that he was not inside the temple; he was standing outside when the incident took place.

The anatomy of a stampede

Sharmila, her husband Vijendra Kumar, Rekha Devi, and Kundan reached the temple at around 8:30 in the morning, Sharmila recalls. They bought flowers for the puja and joined the crowd.

Sharmila says there was no proper queue. Only she and her mother went inside the temple, while her brother and husband stayed outside. Although men are allowed to enter the temple, it is generally women who come to worship.

> For almost an hour, we were in pain. Nobody came to help. My wife died on my lap.
>
> **ARJUN SINGH**
> Vegetable seller

At 9:30 a.m., they finally entered. Within minutes, there was chaos. She saw people pushing one another. Then someone yelled, "*Mar gayi, mar gayi* (She is dead, she is dead)."

"People started falling over each other," Sharmila says. "My mother also fell down. I could not understand what was happening. Hundreds of people were around me, and they were all shouting the names of people they were with."

In the melee, she lost sight of her mother. "People pushed me into a corner, but my mother was left in the middle of the crowd," she says.

After some time, she began searching for her mother near the exit. By then, Kundan had found his sister.

About half an hour later, locals and devotees began pulling out bodies lying inside the temple premises just a few meters away from the inner sanctum. Rekha Devi was among them. They rushed her to the Biharsharif Sadar hospital, about 6 km away, on a scooter, as no ambulance had arrived. "The doctors declared her brought dead," Sharmila says.

Sharmila is as grief-stricken as she is angry. She says there was not a single police person in sight, either inside or outside the temple to manage the crowd.

She also alleges that a temple priest was taking money from devotees and allowing them to enter through the exit gate. "Because of this, the exit gate also got blocked," she says.

Trapped inside

Punam, who had gone to the temple with her mother, alleges that when chaos broke out, authorities shut the gates and put up bamboo barricades, worsening the situation. She claims that both the entrance and exit were blocked.

She had gone to celebrate scoring 63% in the Bihar School Exam Board. "My mother had promised we would visit the temple if I passed with a first division. Within minutes of reaching, I lost her," she says.

Injured devotees undergoing treatment at the Biharsharif Sadar Hospital in Nalanda. AMIT BHELARI

Dinesh Rajak lost his wife, Rita Devi, 50, in the stampede. A father of six and a resident of Sakunat locality in Biharsharif, he came to know about the incident only some two hours later.

Dinesh, who earns a living by going from one village to another selling spices, says his wife and daughter had gone to the temple that day without mobile phones. "At around 12:30 [p.m.], I received a call from an unknown number," he says. "I heard my daughter crying. She told me that her mother had fainted in the temple and had been taken to Sadar hospital."

He rushed there. "I found my daughter standing outside the postmortem centre. My wife's body was lying inside."

For 55-year-old Arjun Singh, a vegetable seller, tragedy has struck twice in the last few years. In 2024, Arjun lost his second son in a train accident. And on March 31, he lost his wife in the stampede.

Nine family members had gone to the temple at around 7:30 a.m., he says. At the entrance of the sanctum, there was a pothole, Arjun recalls. "We did not see it as we were looking ahead. As soon as we stepped in, more than a hundred people fell over us."

He adds, "For almost an hour, we were in pain. Nobody came to help. My wife died on my lap." Arjun has filed a First Information Report against the temple priest for allegedly allowing entry in exchange for money.

"Had the police or temple management made proper arrangements, many lives would have been saved and the incident could have been avoided," asserts Arjun, a father of five.

The aftermath

While nine people died in the incident, 12 others were injured and admitted to Sadar hospital.

Priti Devi, 30, who is recovering from injuries, says the temple is located on a narrow lane lined with shops selling flowers and *prasad*, which delayed the ambulance from reaching the site.

Mukesh Kumar, a resident of the area, says those who fainted were first taken to a nearby Urban Health and Wellness Centre.

Auxiliary Nurse Midwife Sumitra Sinha, 45, who was on duty at the centre, says at least 12 people were brought in. "One woman was brought dead," she says. "For the others, we checked blood pressure, provided ORS (oral rehydration solution), water, and administered CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) where needed."

Pankaj Kumar, whose sister Anushka Sinha, is also hospitalised, says he was able to withstand the pressure of the crowd, but his sister could not. Before the stampede, there was not a single policeman around, he says. "After an hour of the stampede occurring, hundreds of policemen reached the site."

Another resident of the area, Alok Ranjan (46), alleges that most of the police had been deployed in Rajgir. They had been sent there for the visit of President Droupadi Murmu, who had arrived to attend Nalanda University's convocation. Later, Murmu expressed her condolences and prayed for the speedy recovery of the injured.

Soon after the stampede, several senior government officials visited the spot, including Bihar Director General of Police (DGP) Vinay Kumar; Nalanda Superintendent of Police (SP) Bharat Soni; District Magistrate Kundan Kumar; Inspector General (Central Range), Patna, Jitendra Rana; and Director General (Operations) Kundan Krishnan.

Following reports of security lapses in their area, Soni suspended Deep Nagar SHO Rajmani and four other police officers. The government also set up a Special Investigation Team to probe the incident.

On March 31 night, the police conducted raids and arrested four temple priests – Anuj Kumar, Awadhesh Kumar Mishra, Vivekanand Pandey, and Niranjan Kumar Pandey. They have been charged under Section 105 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, which deals with culpable homicide not amounting to murder, and have been sent to judicial custody.

So far, 40 people have been booked in the case for violating security norms and alleged mismanagement during the religious gathering. However, locals claim that several of those booked were not present at the site during the stampede.

Crowd management concerns

Locals and officials say poor crowd control was a major reason for the incident.

"The temple management should have anticipated the overcrowding and taken special care," says one resident. "The structure should have been built to channel the crowd safely."

Bihar DGP Vinay Kumar says, "As soon as I got information about the stampede, I rushed to the site and inspected the premises. We found many lapses. Even a crowd of 1,000 people would have been difficult to manage. That day, there were around 10,000 people." He adds that the temple's structure was not adequate for large gatherings and recommended a security audit for temples where large crowds assemble.

Initial investigations too have found inadequate crowd management and poor arrangements to be the reasons for the tragic incident. The chairperson of the Bihar State Religious Trusts Board, Ranvir Nandan, visited the temple the day after the incident and admitted that there were lapses on the part of the temple management.

"It is the duty of the temple management to hold discussions and chalk out a plan to manage crowds before any large religious gathering. I will ensure that this temple is registered under the Board, which will look after the temple management," Nandan says. According to 2025 data, the Board monitors nearly 2,500 registered temples and trusts. The Board has also identified 2,512 unregistered temples and mutts in Bihar.

After the incident, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar announced ₹6 lakh for victims' families – ₹4 lakh from the Disaster Management Department and ₹2 lakh from the Chief Minister's Relief Fund. Prime Minister Narendra Modi also expressed his condolences and announced ₹2 lakh in financial aid to be paid to the families from the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund, and ₹50,000 to the injured.

All the affected families have received ₹6 lakh each from the District Magistrate's office after postmortem reports confirmed that the deaths were due to compressive asphyxia.

Dinesh Rajak, who lost his wife, says he would save the compensation he has received, for his youngest daughter's marriage.

Incidents like these have happened before in Bihar. On November 19, 2012, as many as 22 people were killed at Adalatganj Ghat in Patna during the Chhath festival. A stampede at Gandhi Maidan in Patna claimed 33 lives during the post-Ravan Vadh programme on October 3, 2014, and three people died in a stampede at Begusarai's Simaria Ghat on November 4, 2017.

The day after the 2026 incident, devotees remained undeterred though the crowd was smaller than usual at the Sheetla Mata temple.

Sushma Kumari, 45, who came to offer prayers on April 1, says, "I heard about the tragic incident in which several women were killed at the temple, but I could not stop myself from visiting. They all died on the lap of Sheetla Mata. I will pray for their souls."

amit.bhelari@thehindu.co.in

From Page One

Russia assures steady oil, LNG supply to India

Mr. Manturov also met with External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and National Security Advisor Ajit Doval, and the leaders discussed continued energy supply to India.

In a press note, the External Affairs Ministry said Mr. Jaishankar and Mr. Manturov "exchanged views on regional and global developments, including the conflict in West Asia."

Mr. Manturov said Russia will deepen nuclear cooperation with India. Other topics such as industrial cooperation, space and educational projects were discussed in the meetings.

Mr. Manturov's Delhi visit, which ended on Friday, took place days after Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and Mr. Jaishankar addressed a conference on bilateral relations through a video link on March 23, during which Mr. Lavrov indicated Russia's preparations for the annual summit.

Mr. Lavrov had expressed Russia's support for the BRICS where India is the current Chair. The group has attracted attention in recent weeks as it has not made a statement on the evolving situation in West Asia, though Russia, India and China, who form a trilateral sub-group called RIC, have indicated that they will work closely within BRICS, Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and the UN on issues that affect common interests of the Global South.

This was followed by the March 30 Foreign Office Consultations between India and Russia led by Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri and Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Andrey Rudenko. This week, the Indian side hosted Vladimir Yakushev, First Deputy Chairman of the Federation Council (upper house) of the Federal Assembly of Russia. On Thursday, Mr. Yakushev met Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha Harivansh Narayan Singh and Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla.

The flurry of conversations between India and Russia has coincided with the growing energy insecurity in India and the rest of South Asia as the war in West Asia continued in the second month. The U.S. had imposed penalty tariffs on India in August 2025 and made India cut down on Russian energy imports with the aim to force Russia make concessions in the war in Ukraine.

Great Nicobar project plan stirs new concerns

They said they were handed a copy of the draft plan on March 28 and have since been called for two meetings by the district administration in Campbell Bay to sign off on it. This comes as the Union government told a Calcutta High Court Bench on March 30 that it needed 15 days to "demonstrate that consent has been taken from the tribal people" for its project. At a meeting on April 1, the Tribal Council submitted a letter pointing out that some aspects of the draft were unclear and requested a Hindi translation of it. They said they would need at least a month to review the translated document.

Notably, while the draft plan states the GNI project "involves relocation", the Centre has repeatedly said the project would not "disturb or displace tribes".

Unclear relocation plans

According to a letter attached to the draft, the plan was prepared after Tribal Council leaders demanded a return to ancestral villages on the west coast of GNI that were destroyed in the 2004 tsunami, after which communities were shifted to encampments in Rajiv Nagar and New Chingenh near Campbell Bay. However, the draft plan states, "The project involves relocation to Rajiv Nagar (32 households, 101 persons) and New Chingenh (30 households, 117 persons)."

In a section, the plan proposes Pulobhabi for "community purposes" of residents in Rajiv Nagar, to "facilitate periodic visits to ancestral lands", while adding, "an option shall remain open" for families to return to ancestral villages outside the project area. For New Chingenh residents, the plan records their desire to return to Old Chingenh and Pulo Baha, but notes a final decision will be taken after assessing land availability and consultations, while their existing accommodations will be upgraded.

Further, the plan lists all enumerated families in Rajiv Nagar and New Chingenh (62 families in total) and then states: "Proposed relocation site: Pulobhabi, western coast of GNI".

The tables in the draft also add to the ambiguity: allocations are made for upgrading 62 homes and building only 30 new homes, while another section states permanent shelters "will be built for all 62 households" – neither part explicitly mentions where these homes would come up. District authorities have not yet responded to *The Hindu*'s queries on what exactly the plan proposes.

A leader of the Tribal Council said Pulobhabi is just one among several ancestral village sites, and the proposal lists only about 13 pre-tsunami Nicobarese villages when there are many more.

In New Delhi on March 20, Great and Little Nicobar Tribal Council chief Barnabas Manju had said the community has long demanded a return to all ancestral villages along the west coast since displacement in 2004.

Soon after the project was granted Stage-I clearance in 2022, the community withdrew their consent, fearing that it would encroach on their forest lands, including ancestral villages, preventing their return. Council leaders say the apprehension has been exacerbated as the administration has not clearly explained project boundaries.

Suspected 'mastermind' in Malda violence arrested

Moffakkerul Islam was seen giving a speech outside the BDO office and urging the crowd not to leave the premises; he was detained while trying to flee from the Bagdogra airport in Bengal

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

Moffakkerul Islam, the alleged mastermind behind the Malda violence where judicial officials were held hostage, was on Friday arrested by the West Bengal Police.

Mr. Islam, a lawyer and resident of Itahar in Uttar Dinajpur district, was seen making speeches outside the block development office (BDO) at Kaliachak II block and urging the crowd not to leave the area. He had contested the 2021 Assembly polls as a candidate of the All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM).

K. Jayaraman, Inspector-General of Police, North Bengal, told media persons in Malda on Friday that Mr. Islam was detained while fleeing the State from Bagdogra airport.

He added that 35 persons were arrested for the violence and 19 cases have been initiated. The police officer said that people have a right to protest but they cannot resort to violence.

Moffakkerul Islam (centre), AIMIM leader and the alleged mastermind behind Malda violence, arrested by West Bengal Police on Friday. ANI

The Election Commission (EC) on Thursday asked the NIA to probe the violence in Malda district.

NIA team reaches Malda

A team of the National Investigation Agency (NIA) visited Mothabari and Kaliachak police stations in Malda district to conduct a probe into the gherao of seven judicial officers by protesting locals over the deletion of names in the special intensive revision (SIR) exercise. The NIA team consists of 24 members led by a senior official.

The officers, who had gone to Kaliachak for judicial adjudication work, were gheraoed by a mob for several hours at Kaliachak block II.

The police had to rescue the officials late on Wednesday night.

The Supreme Court had said gheraoing of the seven judicial officers was not only a "brazen attempt" to browbeat the officers but amounted to a challenge to the authority of the top court.

Mamata shifts blame

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Friday blamed AIMIM and the Indian Secular Front (ISF) for the gherao of judicial officers in Malda district and accused the Congress and the BJP of instigation.

"The BJP loaned him (the accused) from the AIMIM and brought him here," the Trinamool Congress chairperson claimed, while addressing an election rally at Harirampur in Dakshin Dinajpur district.

Ms. Banerjee emphasised that the mastermind behind the gherao of the judicial officers was arrested by the State's CID, and claimed that the police is still under her control and not the EC.

On Thursday, the Chief Minister had urged the people not to resort to violence and said that the game plan of the BJP was to impose President's rule in the State by highlighting such violence.

Govt.'s delimitation move 'dangerous', cautions Congress

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Special session of Parliament held for political mileage in T.N. and Bengal polls, says Jairam Ramesh

The Congress on Friday warned that a hurried move to amend the Constitution for delimitation, alongside amendments to the women's reservation law, during a proposed special sitting of Parliament could have "dangerous consequences" for several States, particularly in the south, northeast and the northwest.

The party alleged that the special sitting is aimed at grabbing "political mileage" in the Assembly elections in West Bengal and Tamil Nadu and called it a "gross violation" of the Model Code of Conduct. Congress president and Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge and his counterpart in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi will call a meeting of senior Congress MPs and then hold a meeting with other Opposition leaders before April 16 to strategise on the special session, Congress communications chief Jairam Ramesh told reporters at a press conference.

Mr. Ramesh described the special session as an "electoral session" where the government wants to take "double credit" for the women's reservation law. "Khargeji had back then demanded that it should be immediately implemented... but they said delimitation and Census were necessary. They kept sleeping for 30 months," Mr. Ramesh said, adding, "The only objective of this special session is to grab political mileage and influence the elections in Tamil Nadu and West Bengal. Could it not have been called 15 days later?"

On delimitation, Mr. Ramesh said there had been no official proposal from the government. "The claim is that it will be proportional, but the reality is that smaller States and those in the south, northeast and the northwest will suffer massively," Mr. Ramesh said.

The issue triggered sharp exchanges in the Rajya Sabha on Thursday.

A year after tensions over Operation Sindoor, India and Azerbaijan to reset ties

Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI

The two sides agreed to 'resolve differences through open dialogue and discussion'

After a year of tensions between India and Azerbaijan over Operation Sindoor, the governments decided to reset ties as senior officials met in Baku for the 6th round of Foreign Office consultations.

The talks, held between Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) Secretary (West) Sibi George and Azerbaijan's Deputy Foreign Minister Elnur Mammadov on Friday are the first such talks since 2022, and after major differences over Azerbaijan-Pakistan and India-Armenia relations.

In a statement, the MEA said the two sides "comprehensively reviewed" the state of bilateral relations. "The issues discussed included trade, technology, tourism, pharmaceuticals, energy, culture, people-to-people exchanges and fight against cross-border terrorism," it added.

Azerbaijan has recently resumed crude oil exports, which make up 98% of the country's exports to India, while ONGC Videsh has a stake in oil and gas fields and an energy pipeline in the country.

The reference to cross-border terrorism in the statement is significant as last year, New Delhi had been angered by Azerbaijan's protest of India's strikes on Pakistani sites during Operation Sindoor, and indicates that the two countries have smoothed over some of their differences. In a statement on May 7 last year, the Azerbaijan Foreign Ministry has "condemned military attacks against Pakistan that killed and injured several civilians," and called on all parties to "resolve the conflict through diplomatic means."

Azerbaijan and Pakistan have a close strategic partnership, given Islamabad's support to Azerbaijan in the dispute over Nagorno Karabakh, while Azerbaijan accused India of arming Armenia in the conflict.

Sources said that during talks on Friday, the two sides had agreed to "resolve differences through open dialogue and discussion". Mr. George called on the Foreign Policy Adviser to President Aliyev and Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov of Azerbaijan where they "reviewed the bilateral ties and exchanged views on matters of common interest".

Stalin writes to PM on FCRA Amendment Bill, terms the draft legislation 'draconian'

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin on Friday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressing deep anguish and concern over the Union government's introduction of the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) (FCRA) Amendment Bill, 2026, in Parliament.

M.K. Stalin

Mr. Stalin contended that neither the Union government nor States possessed the capacity to replace the educational, medical, and charitable services rendered by non-profit organisations.

Terming it a "draconian Bill," Mr. Stalin pointed out that it sought to dismantle India's charitable organisations by enabling the Union government, at its discretion, to cancel the FCRA registration of an organisation and take over its assets – whether it is a church, school, or hospital – "without any due process."

He said the Bill, therefore, was "*ex-facie* contrary" to Articles 25, 29, 30, and 300-A of the Constitution and is nothing but an "assault on minority-run institutions".

The Bill intended to "completely cut off funding" to such charitable activities and poses an existential threat to charitable organisations reliant on foreign funds. The expansion of liability to "key functionaries", coupled with an implicit presumption of guilt, will deter honest individuals who want to contribute to charitable work in India, Mr. Stalin said.

"Consequently, the immediate victims will not be just the organisations, but the millions of vulnerable citizens who depend on these institutions for education and healthcare... the result will be a collapse of grassroots welfare infrastructure across the country," he added.

He said, in a nutshell, this Bill represented a "fundamental attack on religious freedom and charity by civil society".

"If enacted, this legislation will leave a permanent scar on India's democratic, secular, and humanitarian legacy. I, therefore, urge you, in the strongest possible terms, to immediately withdraw the FCRA Bill, 2026," Mr. Stalin said.

Home Ministry revises classification of districts affected by left-wing extremism

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

The Union Home Ministry has re-categorised the total number of districts affected by left-wing extremism (LWE) in the country replacing the earlier classification of "most affected" with "LWE affected," "districts of concern" and "legacy and thrust districts".

While the number of districts in the LWE category remains unchanged at 38 compared to 2024-25, the classification now reflects shifts in the severity of violence reported in these areas.

The red corridor has significantly contracted – from over 200 districts in 2005 to just two in 2026 – and its definition has also been revised.

On March 27, three days before Home Minister Amit Shah declared in Lok Sabha that the country is now "Naxal-free," the Ministry reviewed the "categorisation of districts affected by LWE" and sent the fresh list to the Home Secretaries and Directors-General of Police (DGP) of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Telangana, and West Bengal. While Bijapur in Chhattisgarh and West Singbhum in Jharkhand are the only two districts that have been characterised as "LWE affected", Kanker in Chhattisgarh is a "district of concern", and there are 35 other "legacy and thrust districts" across nine States.

A skill and rehabilitation centre has been set up for former Maoists in Dantewada.

These districts are Alluri Sitaramraju in Andhra Pradesh; Aurangabad, Gaya, Jamui, Lakhisarai in Bihar; Bastar, Narayanpur, Kondagaon, Bijapur, Dhamtari, Kabirdham, Khairagarh-Chhuikhadan-Gandai, Mohla-Manpur-Ambagarh Chowki, Gariyaband, Sukma and Dantewada in Chattisgarh; Bokaro, Chatra and Latehar in Jharkhand; Balaghat and Mandla in Madhya Pradesh; Gadchiroli and Gondia in Maharashtra; Boudh, Sundargarh, Kalahandi, Koraput, Malkangiri, Nabarangpur, Nuapada, Rayagada, Kandhamal in Odisha; Bhadradri-Kothagudem, Mulugu in Telangana and Jhargram in West Bengal.

Till November 2025, Bijapur, Sukma and Narayanpur, in Chhattisgarh were included in the category of "most affected".

"The categorisation of districts provides the basis for deployment of resources under various schemes. The evolving LWE situation necessitates a periodic review of the districts in order to ensure that the focus of anti-LWE efforts remains aligned to the ground realities," the Ministry said.

It added that the districts covered under the Security Related Expenditure (SRE) Scheme have been comprehensively revised again.

Special court closes Panchkula land case against Hooda, AJL

Press Trust of India
PANCHKULA

A special court in Panchkula on Friday discharged former Haryana Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda and the Associated Journals Limited (AJL) in a money laundering case linked to re-allotment of a plot in Panchkula, after closing the Enforcement Directorate's (ED) case against them.

The order follows a February 25 ruling by the Punjab and Haryana High Court, which set aside a 2021 order that had framed charges against Mr. Hooda and others in the case.

Special Judge under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), Rajeev Goyal, closed the ED's complaint, as Mr. Hooda and the AJL, the publisher of *National Herald*, had already been discharged in the main case pursued by the CBI, Mr. Hooda's counsel, S.P.S. Parmar told presspersons.

Bhupinder Singh Hooda

The Punjab and Haryana High Court had observed that the material placed on record did not even *prima facie* establish the essential ingredients of the alleged offences against the petitioners.

ASSEMBLY POLLS

Cow, buffalo for Assam's tribal families: Shah

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) would give a cow and a buffalo to each tribal family in Assam if voted to power for the third straight term, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said on Friday.

Addressing an election rally at Dudhnoi in western Assam's Goalpara district, he also promised a large dairy in every district of the State.

Although more than 57% (Census 2011) of the people in Goalpara are Muslims, part of the district falls under the Rabha Hasong Autonomous Council. Rabhas are the dominant tribe in the district, followed by Garos and Bodos.

Underlining the BJP's pro-tribal outlook, Mr. Shah said that the Union Budget for the indigenous peoples jumped from a static ₹25,000 crore to ₹1.38 lakh crore after Prime Minister Narendra Modi took charge in 2014.

Budget for indigenous peoples rose to ₹1.38 lakh crore under PM Modi, says Amit Shah.

Left-ISF rift over selection of candidate

The alliance between the Left Front and the Indian Secular Front (ISF) has encountered a major hurdle over the nomination of Arabul Islam, who defected from the Trinamool Congress, from the Canning Purba Assembly seat by the ISF. In some constituencies in West Bengal, both the Left Front and the ISF have fielded candidates though the two are in a seat-sharing arrangement.

This has led to discontent among the other parties in the Left Front, including Forward Bloc, which has fielded its candidate from Madhyamgram even as the ISF announced its candidate for the constituency.

West Bengal State secretary of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), Mohammad Salim, slammed the ISF for backing Mr. Islam as a candidate.

"I have come to Assam to strengthen Muslim leadership in the State and to ensure that Muslims can lead a dignified life

ASADUDDIN OWAISI
AIMIM president

Owaisi planted as 'distraction' by BJP: Cong

The Congress on Friday claimed the BJP had planted AIMIM president Asaduddin Owaisi as a "distraction" ahead of the April 9 election in Assam. "...We are attacking the BJP, not him. So, why is he attacking Congress instead of the BJP, the ruling party?" Congress leader Pawan Khera said.

"The Congress govt. [in Assam] had opened the gates for infiltrators for vote bank politics. During their tenure, women and land were not safe

NITIN NABIN
BJP president

AJP candidate Kunki Chowdhury during the election campaign in Guwahati on March 25. ANI

Pakistan jibes become central to BJP's Assam poll narrative

Rahul Karmakar
GUWAHATI

Bangladesh has been an election staple in Assam. Pakistan, the country it was liberated from in 1971, has debuted as narrative material this poll season.

On Thursday, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma slammed the Assam Jatiya Parishad (AJP) chief, Lurinjyoti Gogoi, for fielding a candidate linked to "anti-national" elements, including Sharjeel Imam, who had allegedly called for cutting off the northeastern region from the rest of the country. The AJP is a constituent of the Congress-led Asom Sonmilito Morcha, the Opposition alliance. The candidate in question is 28-year-old Kunki Chowdhury. The London-educated AJP candidate for the Guwahati Central constituency is pitted against Vijay Kumar Gupta of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

More than the candidate, the Chief Minister ranted against her mother, Sujata Gurung Chowdhury, for publicly supporting the "anti-India" Mr. Imam and Umar Khalid, both accused in the 2020 Delhi riots case and now in jail. He also criticised her mother for trashing the perception that Pakistan was an enemy nation.

Ms. Chowdhury hit back saying Mr. Sarma's allegations against her mother were "entirely baseless" but thanked him for "letting the entire country know about me" by dragging her mother into the electoral rivalry.

Gogoi's alleged Pakistan link

During his campaign for the BJP, Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said State Congress president and Jorhat MP Gaurav Gogoi should come clean on his visit to Pakistan more than a decade ago.

Mr. Fadnavis had picked up from where his Assam counterpart had left off. On March 31, Mr. Sarma, the BJP's candidate from the Jalukbari constituency, attacked Mr. Gogoi over alleged discrepancies in his election affidavit. The latter is contesting eastern Assam's Jorhat Assembly seat.

The Chief Minister said Mr. Gogoi's affidavit did not disclose any Pakistani bank account, despite allegedly referring to such an account during a recent press conference.

"Any such financial details, including those linked to family members, should have been transparently declared in the affidavit. The omission is a serious issue...," he said.

Earlier, Mr. Sarma had questioned Mr. Gogoi's "suspicious" 10-day visit to Pakistan in December 2013 and his British wife, Elizabeth Colburn Gogoi's professional stint with a climate organisation in the neighbouring country.

In 2025, the Chief Minister had a Special Investigation Team of the Assam police formed to probe the alleged Pakistan links of Mr. Gogoi and his wife.

'Wild theory'

Mr. Gogoi described the allegations as a "wild theory" and said that such claims reflect the Chief Minister's "weakness" on a sensitive issue like national security. "There is a difference between what Himanta Biswa Sarma is saying and what we are saying against him; his is a wild theory that exists only in his head," he said.

Mr. Gogoi said that the Congress's allegations against Mr. Sarma relate to family, wealth, corruption, and the favours his wife's company were getting from the government machinery. "These claims are backed by publicly available information," he added.

Theorising a third term for LDF in Kerala, one couplet at a time

CPI(M) general secretary M.A. Baby says 'alternative model' led by Left should not be disrupted; BJP's communal politics is the biggest challenge for Kerala and Congress is yet to understand the threat of communal fascism in the country, he says

CAMPAIGN TRAIL

Varghese K. George
THRISSUR

Letters and ideas sit more comfortably on CPI(M) general secretary M.A. Baby's sleeve than power, though his party has been in power for 10 years in Kerala.

"I would rather say we are in office. Power is with the people," he said, over a lunch of *surmai* fish biryani during the midday break from campaigning in central Kerala.

Earlier in the day, he had inaugurated a convention of Left cultural activists. Mr. Baby is not comfortable with the idea of him inaugurating it. "I (am) no bigger than any one of you... Since inauguration is a formality, I am declaring we have all inaugurated this together."

Voter outreach: M.A. Baby exudes confidence that there is no anti-incumbency sentiment in the State and that 'people are anxious to ensure continuity of governance'. PTI

Battling communalism

Mr. Baby believes the battle against communalism lies in the realm of culture. "Cultural intervention and intervention in culture," he said.

The LDF candidate in Thrissur, considered the cultural capital of Kerala, is Alankode Leelakrishnan, a poet. "The first is about the deployment of cultural instruments, poetry, films, etc. for progress; the second is about intervening in the cultural behaviour of people – for instance, why should children carry names of their fathers and not of their mothers?"

Thrissur became the first Lok Sabha seat to be won by the BJP in Kerala, in 2024. On Thursday evening, a rally of the BJP candidate in neighbouring Manalur rivalled that of the LDF. "The growth of communal politics represented by the BJP is the biggest challenge for Kerala. Largely, it is non-Left voters that the BJP is attracting, but in some areas even our supporters are tempted," he said.

Mr. Baby believes that the Congress, his party's principal rival in Kerala but partner against the BJP in many other parts of the country, does not understand the threat of communal fascism in the country. "Congress opposes the BJP only to the extent that they want power for themselves," he said.

Mr. Baby moves freely from prose to poetry, and from historian Eric Hobsbawm to Malayalam poet Vailoppilli Sreedhara Menon and Valdimir Lenin to make his point. The cultural legacy of Kerala is deeply homegrown, the ideas of equity and equality are not foreign imports, as Union Home Minister Amit Shah recently implied in the parliamentary debate on Maoism, said Mr. Baby.

For the first time in Kerala's history, the same front and the same Chief Minister have been in office for two consecutive terms and are seeking a third. The Left must stand for change, but in Kerala it is continuity that the party sees virtue in.

Emphasis on continuity

"This is about the continuity of Kerala, not of a party or a front. An alternative model that has been developing in the State for decades should not be disrupted. The last 10 years saw dramatic progress in that model, and that needs to continue. In the current term, the Pinarayi government eradicated absolute poverty in the State; and now we need to move further in the same direction. That is why we seek a third term."

The party chief is confident that there is no anti-incumbency sentiment in the State. "People are anxious to ensure continuity of governance," he said, but remained non-committal on whether Mr. Vijayan himself would be Chief Minister for a third term. "We always make that decision after the election. The Chief Minister himself has made that very clear."

102 Assam candidates face criminal cases: ADR

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Around 14% of candidates contesting the upcoming Assam Assembly election have declared criminal cases against themselves. Of these, 11% have declared serious criminal cases, according to an analysis by the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR).

Out of the 722 candidates fighting this Assembly election in Assam, 102 (14%) candidates have declared criminal cases against themselves. In the 2021 Assembly election, of the 941 candidates analysed, 138 (15%) had declared criminal cases against themselves.

Among the major parties, 28 (28%) of the 99 candidates of the Congress and eight (9%) of the 90 BJP candidates have declared criminal cases against themselves in their affidavit. Eleven (37%) out of 30 AIUDF candidates, six (23%) out of 26 Asom Gana Parishad nominees, two (15%) out of 13 Raijor Dal candidates, two (20%) out of 10 candidates from the Assam Jatiya Parishad, and one (33%) out of three CPI(ML) candidates have also declared criminal cases. Only two candidates have declared cases related to crime against women.

'Congress has become ideologically bankrupt'

The Left Democratic Front government in Kerala has been successful on many fronts and will win a third consecutive term, says CPI general secretary D. Raja; accusing the Congress of resorting to 'slanderous campaigns and allegations', he says it must criticise the government on the basis of issues

INTERVIEW

D. Raja

S. Anandan
MUNNAR

D. Raja, general secretary of the Communist Party of India, accuses the Congress of being short-sighted and asks the party to introspect. Campaigning for the Left Democratic Front (LDF) in Munnar for the Kerala Assembly election, he spoke to *The Hindu*. Edited excerpts:

You are talking to the Tamil population in Munnar in Tamil...

I campaigned in Tamil in Thiruvananthapuram and Punalur as well, as the people wanted me to. There is such great affection and the people want to hear about issues relating to their livelihood and the State's progress rather than baseless allegations.

While the Left in Kerala is seeking continuity, it is under attack for an alleged tacit understanding with the BJP and also with the Social Democratic Party of India (SDPI).

These are all baseless allegations. Looking at history, Kerala elected the world's first Communist government through the ballot in 1957. The people here know very well what the Left movement stands for and what the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) represents. Nobody can undermine the political maturity and ideological understanding of the people of Kerala. The Left is the most uncompromising force fighting communal and fascist forces, from the majority or the minority. When (Congress leader) Rahul Gandhi says "the Left has lost its Left character", what does he mean? Will he be able to explain?

The people will assess political parties on the basis of their performance and their political and ideological vision for the future of Kerala. Going by the mood of the people, I believe the LDF will continue in power for a third consecutive term. Adult franchise is one of the major achievements of our democracy, and how people vote is entirely up to them. However, we have no ideological or political compromise with any communal forces.

Given the LDF's debacle in the local body elections just two months ago, isn't there anti-incumbency at work?

ASIF BALUU

Yes, there were some setbacks, but people vote in local body elections taking into account many factors, such as local administrative issues and the conduct of individuals. On issues that have far-reaching implications for the welfare of the people and the development of the State, people take wise and measured decisions. Kerala is known for its communal harmony; people live together and share their problems and challenges. That is why the Left matters to the people of Kerala.

Is it a matter of concern for the Left that the BJP has been making inroads into Kerala's polity?

Definitely. Its vote share has increased to some extent in recent times and its propaganda has become widespread. Starting from the Prime Minister, the BJP's top leaders frequently visit Kerala because they view a Left-administered Kerala as a challenge to them. Their desperation is clear from Mr. Modi's body language. He comes to Kerala and speaks of 'Viksit Keralam'. Earlier he spoke of 'Viksit Bharat'. What happened to that? Is Kerala not part of 'Viksit Bharat'? Where is the BJP in South India? It is a matter of concern for the BJP that the people continue to reject it. The party's manipulations in Bihar, Maharashtra and Haryana do not work here. The South has its own distinct history, and the BJP knows that its politics cannot succeed in this region.

Narendra Modi came here and raised the issue of Kerala's debt. Now the people, and I, are asking: what is India's foreign debt today? Who is responsible for it? What has happened to the value of the Indian rupee? Mr. Modi should be ashamed of this situation. When he was Chief Minister of Gujarat, he said that the value of the Indian rupee reflected the honour of the nation. Where is that honour now?

You mentioned Rahul Gandhi's comments. Is the Congress equally desperate, having been out of power for 10 years?

Yes, the Congress and Mr. Gandhi are desperate. But they should undertake some serious introspection. The Congress must accept responsibility for the defeat of the *Mahagatbandhan* in the Bihar election. There was no proper seat-sharing or joint campaign. The situation in Haryana was no different, and the Congress should take the blame. The ideological bankruptcy and political incompetence of the Congress are there for all to see. Yet it refuses to introspect on how to function effectively in a democracy such as ours.

That is why the Congress has become desperate and is stooping to such a low level, resorting to slanderous campaigns and allegations.

So, is the Congress responsible for the failures of the INDIA bloc?

That is precisely what we have been pointing out to the Congress. When we work together, there must be mutual trust and mutual accommodation. Our primary objective is to protect the Constitution, to safeguard the secular democratic republic, and to take the country forward on the principles of social justice and equality.

As far as Kerala is concerned, the LDF's performance is there for everyone to see. If the Congress genuinely wishes to criticise the LDF, let it take up even one issue and criticise the government on that basis. We can say with confidence that the LDF government has been successful on many fronts. Kerala ranks first on many indices: it has recorded the lowest multi-dimensional poverty, it leads in healthcare, life expectancy stands at 75 years, and there has been notable progress in education and public-sector employment. The government has also increased the minimum wages of labourers.

Let the Congress therefore identify at least one issue on which it can argue that the LDF government has failed or made no progress. Instead, it has resorted to a slanderous campaign. This is something Mr. Gandhi should realise; as the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, he must speak with greater responsibility.

INBRIEF

Indigenous stealth frigate *INS Taragiri* commissioned

In a significant boost to India's maritime security and the 'Aatmanirbharta' initiative, the guided-missile stealth frigate *INS Taragiri* was commissioned into the Indian Navy at the Eastern Naval Command base in Visakhapatnam on Friday. The ceremony, attended by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan, and Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Dinesh K. Tripathi, marked the induction of a vessel that represents a generational leap in naval engineering. Powered by a combined diesel or gas propulsion engine and equipped with supersonic surface-to-surface missiles and advanced anti-submarine suites, the frigate is now a cornerstone of the Eastern Fleet.

Ganderbal encounter: J&K L-G orders magisterial inquiry

Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant-Governor Manoj Sinha on Friday ordered a magisterial inquiry into the Ganderbal encounter, in which the Army claimed to have killed a terrorist in an overnight operation on March 31-April 1. "The inquiry will examine all the aspects related to the incident and ensure that justice is served," said Mr. Sinha, in a post on X. The Jammu & Kashmir Home Department has given seven days to the District Magistrate, Ganderbal, to investigate the incident and submit the report. Raashid Ahmad Mughal was killed in a cordon-and-search operation conducted by the Army's 02 Assam Rifles, 24 Rashtriya Rifles, CRPF's 49 Battalion, and the J&K Police, Ganderbal.

Compliance eased for managing plastic waste

Companies that fail to meet their targets can carry forward the shortfall for up to three years; they can also meet their obligations by purchasing credits from others that exceed their targets

Jacob Koshy
NEW DELHI

India's latest amendment to its Plastic Waste Management Rules leaves headline recycling targets unchanged, but introduces a series of provisions that allows companies to shift their compliance deadlines.

These provisions include allowing companies that fail to meet their targets in 2025-26 to carry forward the shortfall for up to three years, provided they make up at least a third of the deficit annually. Prior to this, companies were bound to comply annually.

"The unfulfilled target for the year 2025-26 may be carried forward for three subsequent years starting 2026-27... provided that at least one-third of the unfulfilled target is met in each of those years, until the entire carried-forward target is achieved," says a gazette notification by the Environment Ministry dated March 31.

The rules also formalise a system of tradable certificates, enabling companies to meet their obligations by purchasing credits from others that exceed their targets. While this creates flexibility and may reduce compliance costs, it also means firms are not necessarily required to recycle their own plastic footprint.

The Rules require companies to collect and process the equivalent of 100% of the plastic they introduce into the market. K.V.S. GIRI

Targets also do not apply where other regulations – for example, food safety standards – restrict the use of recycled plastic. This could exclude significant segments of packaging from the mandate, particularly in the food and beverage sector.

The 2026 amendment retains a phased set of targets for recycled content and reuse in plastic packaging, continuing the trajectory first introduced under the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) framework in 2022, which for the first time specified collection targets for plastic waste producers and users of plastic packaging.

For 2025-26, producers and importers must ensure that rigid plastic packaging (Category I) contains at least 30% recycled material, rising to 60% by 2028-29. Flexible plastics (Category II) are subject to a 10% requirement in 2025-26, increasing to 20% thereafter, while multi-layered plastics (Category III) must meet a 5% threshold, rising to 10%. In parallel, the rules mandate reuse obligations for rigid packaging: 10% for smaller containers (0.9-4.9 litres), 70% for large water packaging, and 10% for large non-water packaging in 2025-26, with incremental increases over time.

Category 1 includes PET water or soft drink bottles or HDPE milk bottles/ shampoo bottles. These are the easiest to collect. Category 2 includes Plastic carry bags/ grocery bags, snack or chips packets (single-layer flexible film). Category 3 or multi-layered plastic, such as small cartons and foil snack wrappers, are the hardest to collect.

India's plastic waste rules require companies to collect and process the equivalent of 100% of the plastic they introduce into the market by 2024-25, marking the final phase of the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) rollout. However, there is no public evidence to suggest that this target has been fully achieved in practice. No comprehensive public dataset or official assessment demonstrates system-wide compliance, and much of the reporting continues to rely on self-declarations through a centralised portal.

Rajasthan High Court expunges remarks on Transgender Act

Aaratrika Bhaumik
NEW DELHI

The Rajasthan High Court has modified its March 30 verdict to expunge certain portions criticising the recently enacted Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Act, 2026. In a clarificatory order issued on Thursday, the court said that its observations that the amendment diluted constitutional guarantees had been included "by mistake" and were "neither intended nor necessary."

The March 30 ruling on a petition filed by a transgender woman included an epilogue authored by Justice Arun Monga, which observed that the new law, by curtailing the right to gender self-identification, departs from the "constitutional baseline" set by the Supreme Court's 2014 ruling in *National Legal Services Authority v. Union of India*. It noted that the amendment risked reducing what the top court had recognised as an "inviolable aspect of personhood" to a "contingent, State-mediated entitlement".

The amendment Bill was passed in Parliament last week and became law with the President's assent late on Monday.

In its Thursday order, the High Court Bench observed that certain portions had been inadvertently included in the epilogue of the earlier judgment and directed the deletion of paragraphs which stated that the rights of transgender persons must not be "rendered illusory by procedural constraints" and which criticised the amendment for making legal recognition of gender identity contingent upon "certification, scrutiny, or other forms of administrative endorsement".

"Upon our re-reading of the epilogue, it appears that by mistake the following text was included therein, although it was neither intended nor necessary," said the Bench, which included Justice Yogendra Kumar Purohit. However, the judges declined a request that the epilogue be excluded from the judgment or disregarded for precedential purposes.

In the revised epilogue, the Bench retained its position that the right to self-identify one's gender is an "intrinsic facet of dignity, autonomy, and personal liberty under Articles 14, 15, 16 and 21" and "not a matter of concession, but a matter of right". It, however, added that the epilogue is to be treated as a "statement of facts in the process of a changing legal landscape".

INS Aridhaman, nuclear-powered submarine, enters India's naval fleet

Sumit Bhattacharjee
VISAKHAPATNAM

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh presided over a brief ceremony to formally commission the country's third nuclear submarine, *INS Aridhaman* (S4), which is the third in the Arihant-class of SSBNs (Submersible Ship Ballistic Nuclear), on Friday at Visakhapatnam.

The vessel, being part of the strategic weapons programme, falls under the domain of the Strategic Forces and is part of the country's nuclear triad. As per sources in the Navy, the commissioning was not made public and was carried out quietly, but Mr. Singh dropped enough hints to acknowledge the commissioning of the vessel.

The nuclear submarine *INS Aridhaman* ahead of its commissioning ceremony in Visakhapatnam. PTI

While the event was kept under wraps, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh posted a cryptic message on X, describing the submarine as: "It's not words but power, 'Aridhaman'!"

Sources in the Navy said that the commissioning of *INS Aridhaman* was on the cards, as the submarine had already undergone extensive sea trials, and it coincided with Mr. Singh's visit to Visakhapatnam for the commissioning of the stealth guided-missile frigate *INS Taragiri*.

The closely guarded SSBN project, initially launched as the Advanced Technology Vessel (ATV) project, is being executed by the Ship Building Centre (SBC) in Visakhapatnam. The first vessel was launched in July 2009 and was quietly commissioned in 2016. The second indigenously built SSBN, *INS Arighaat*, was commissioned in August 2024.

While *Arihant* and *Arighaat* are smaller vessels of about 6,000 tonnes, *Aridhaman* (S4) and S4* are bigger vessels of about 7,000 tonnes. The S4* (which may be named *Arisudan*) is currently undergoing sea trials.

Compared to its predecessors, *Aridhaman* and its successor S4* will have more firepower.

India is already one of the nations, along with the U.S., Russia, China, and France, to possess a nuclear triad capability, which means it has the ability to launch nuclear-tipped missiles from air, land, and sea.

The Hindu Group, SRMIST to host deep tech summit

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

The Hindu Group, in association with the SRM Institute of Science and Technology (SRMIST), will host the two-day Deep Tech Summit 2026 on April 6 and 7, bringing together policymakers, investors, and leaders of industry, academia, and start-ups, aimed at shaping the future of deep technology in the country.

The first day will feature fireside chats with government leadership on India's deep tech vision, and with IIT- Madras Professor Ashok Jhunjhunwala on innovation ecosystems. Expert panels will discuss "The Deep Tech Decade: Engineering the next Revolution' and 'Re-engineering Academic Research for Industrial Agility".

On day two, the highlights include a keynote session featuring thought leaders from academia and industry, panel discussions on "The State as De-Risker - Aligning Academic Excellence with National Missions" and "Convergence of Disciplines - Breaking Traditional Engineering Silos", and a fireside chat with leaders from entrepreneurship and innovation ecosystems.

Expert panel

Amitesh Kumar Sinha, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), and CEO, India Semiconductor Mission, will be the chief guest. Experts on the panel are set to include Panneerselvam Madanagopal, CEO, MeitY Startup Hub; C. Muthamizhchelvan, Vice-Chancellor, SRMIST; and B. Govindarajan, CEO, Royal Enfield.

The event will be held at Feathers - a Radha Hotel, Chennai on April 6 and 7. Participants, investors, start-ups, and innovation enablers can register at newsth.live/DPTCL2026PA

There will also be a master class by Parag Agarwal, CEO, UniversityTech.io and workshops by i-Hub Foundation for Cobotics, the technology innovation hub of IIT Delhi, and the Credit Guarantee Scheme for Startups. Start-up pitch rounds will continue throughout the day on both days.

Bihar hooch tragedy: toll rises to five, 12 arrested

The Hindu Bureau
PATNA

The death toll in the suspected hooch tragedy in Motihari in East Champaran district of Bihar rose to five on Friday as four more people died, Deputy Inspector-General of police (Champaran Range) Har Kishore Rai said. In all, 12 people have so far been arrested.

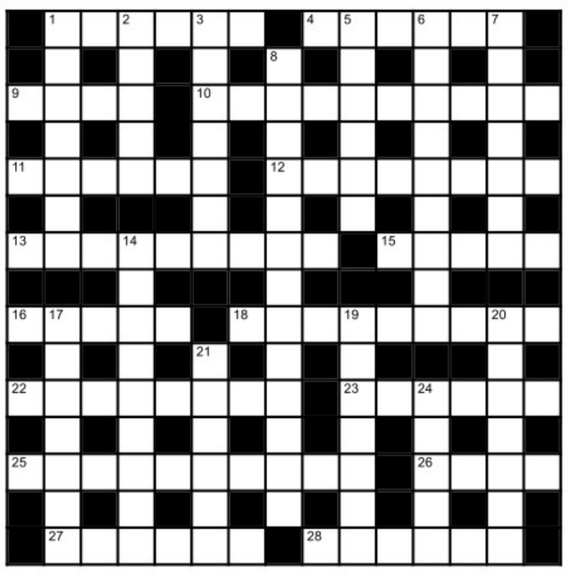
Six people are undergoing treatment, while seven were discharged after initial treatment, the police said. Sources said several of those undergoing treatment have lost their eyesight. A Special Investigation Team has been formed to probe the incident. Turkauliya Police Station Station House Officer Umashankar Manjhi has been suspended.

TH CROSSWORD + 14759

(set by Afterdark)

Solve this puzzle online and access more puzzles at *https://thehindu.com/crosswords*

SCAN TO PLAY



Across

1 Leaking doctor's intellectual property disheartened personally (6)
4 Quarterfinals always leads to a medical condition (1,5)
9 Heads from Gulf Union fear foreign baloney (4)
10 Say forest transport's wild bison and buckram essentially (6,4)
11 Miser investing a lot in business (6)
12 Secret cult loses leader, English Prior's powerless (8)
13 Type of pistol to ignore; rumoured to lack iron-sight primarily (4-5)
15 Reform people in a dungeon at first (5)
16 A soft calcite found in Switzerland and Albania by knight (5)
18 Say, Rajinikanth is fan magnet, appearing in papers every second (5,4)
22 Slow single male worker passes assignments essentially (8)
23 Duckett legally blocked a container (6)
25 Something preceding it may concern (10)
26 Persuade to live at the outskirts of Nadiad (4)
27 Would he be testing for poison taking egg out of kitchen equipment (6)
28 Fly with El Salvador head (6)

Down

1 French heir unpaid in revolution, cross heart (7)
2 Train Frank to hide below (5)
3 Pass to enter good company with instrument (7)
5 Hostile France meets East Germany on the fourth of July (6)
6 My servant becomes a church official (9)
7 One day in conflict and confrontation ultimately leads to poor health (3-4)
8 Belligerent martinet with vague manoeuvres (13)
14 Tennis, Cricket, Hockey, Golf, Soccer, etc. (4,5)
17 Warm, square, intense and highly successful (7)
19 Games for American children with fine arts after final briefing (2-5)
20 Collection at Indian festival no good, cheap essentially (7)
21 Mislead auditor by removing core of unit (6)
24 A little setback, one crack in the middle bone (5)

SUDOKU

8	9	4				2		
6					7			
		5	8					3
		8		7		6	5	2
2	5	6		4		3		
5					3	9		
			6					5
		9				4	2	8

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

No.SS6840 Distribution: www.knightfeatures.com

Solution to previous puzzle

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

7	3	6	9	5	4	8	1	2
8	4	2	3	1	6	5	9	7
9	5	1	7	2	8	3	6	4
4	7	3	2	8	9	6	5	1
1	6	5	4	7	3	2	8	9
2	9	8	1	6	5	4	7	3
5	1	9	6	4	2	7	3	8
3	8	4	5	9	7	1	2	6
6	2	7	8	3	1	9	4	5

FAITH

Salvation within reach

Jesus' punishment was in full public view. The State and the Temple priests decided to make an example of offenders of society, sometime on that day, it was decided that two thieves will be crucified along with Christ, whereby a message was being conveyed that Jesus was also a criminal. From the Cross, the thieves spoke to each other and to Jesus. Christ then ended the conversation, saying to one of them, "Verily, I say unto thee, thou shall be with me in Paradise." Those near the Cross could hear the officials and the soldiers mocking Jesus Christ. One of the thieves joined them, goading Jesus, saying, "If Thou be Christ, save Yourself and us." He believed that Jesus had to prove Himself by getting down from the Cross and saving all three of them. However, the other thief, realising that the thieves were facing the consequences of a sinful life, took steps to change his future. Turning his head, he said to Christ, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." And Jesus said, "Today you shall be with me in Paradise." The thief received salvation by believing in Jesus and appealing for eternal life with Him.

Acts 16:31 says, 'Believe in Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.' Romans 6:23 says, 'The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord.' The thief did not merit salvation by his deeds. But the Bible says salvation, eternal life, is the free gift of God. The thief, the sinner, in his dying moments on the cross turned to Jesus and asked to be part of His kingdom. The lesson he showed is clear: First, there is no sin that God does not forgive. Second, God grants salvation instantly. Third, there is no designated place for being saved.

The order builds on a Section 232 investigation launched on May 1, 2025.

Patented drug tariffs: 'India more or less shielded'

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

India is unlikely to be significantly impacted by U.S. President Donald Trump's announcement of 100% tariffs on certain patented drugs, as the country primarily exports low-cost generic medicines to America, think tank GTRI said.

Mr. Trump signed an executive order on April 2, announcing the imposition of a 100% ad valorem duty on the import of certain patented pharmaceuticals and associated pharmaceutical ingredients.

The order builds on a Section 232 investigation launched on May 1, 2025, which cited national security risks from dependence on foreign drug supplies.

The Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) said the move has left "India largely protected, given its dominance in low-cost generic drug exports to the U.S." In 2025, India exported $9.7 billion pharmaceuticals to the U.S.

MSMEs 'reluctant' to switch over to piped natural gas supplies

Industry officials point to deficiency in PNG supply post war breakout and also infrastructure insufficiencies for hesitation to switch fuels

M. Soundariya Preetha
COIMBATORE

The Micro, Small and Medium-scale Enterprises (MSMEs) in the manufacturing sector have expressed fears about switching over to Piped Natural Gas (PNG) from commercial LPG cylinders.

The 1.65 crore registered MSMEs are located in multiple clusters across the country and some of the States have PNG for these clusters for decades.

Sunil Desai, who runs a MSME in Vadodara, said units in Vadodara have been having PNG supply for almost 40 years now.

'No supply guarantee'

"Yet, there is 20% to 50% reduction in supply because of the war. So, what is the guarantee on the consistency of supply for the MSMEs," he asks.

The calorific value of PNG is a tad lower than LPG. So, industries opting for PNG should have the technical knowledge on the gas supply they are going to choose, he adds.

Anil Bhardwaj, secretary general of the Federation of Indian MSMEs, said the MSMEs were unhappy with the government's decision asking commercial LPG cylinder customers to register for PNG to get the additional LPG supply.

Ifs and buts: The calorific value of PNG is a tad lower than LPG, according to officials of some MSMEs. B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

Many MSMEs shift jobs such as welding to different sites and need cylinders for the purpose

Lack infrastructure

"Not all areas of an industrial city have PNG infrastructure. Providing this will take time. The MSMEs should have the option of both, LPG and PNG. Though the units may have to make investments internally to change equipment for PNG use, what is worrying them more is the lack of PNG infrastructure, especially in the NCR and Tamil Nadu," he added.

President of the Coimbatore District Small Industries Association, M. Karthikeyan, said it will not be economically viable for micro industries to switch over to PNG as they will have to spend on infrastructure. Also, many units work out of rented premises.

Sudhakar Sundaravel, national head of the SME doman of the All India Professionals' Congress, said MSMEs were not confined to a defined area.

"The concept maybe good and the industries may be willing. But, do we have the infrastructure? And when it is done in a hurry, how do we ensure safety standards?" he asks.

Many MSMEs shift jobs such as welding to different sites and need cylinders that can be carried for such jobs, he pointed out.

European airlines race for Asia's direct traffic

Jagriti Chandra
NEW DELHI

Premium attached to non-stop travel with strong demand is pushing fares to almost double

As geopolitical tensions ripple through West Asia, reshaping passenger preference away from efficient, lower-cost Gulf hub connections toward the certainty of non-stop travel, global carriers such as Lufthansa, Air Canada and British Airways are redrawing networks by adding frequencies to India along with South East Asian and East Asian destinations.

The most significant frequency boost has come from the Lufthansa Group where it stepped-up frequencies across four Indian routes.

Frankfurt-Chennai will increase from five weekly flights to daily service from April 24 through the end of May; Frankfurt-Hyderabad will rise from five to six weekly flights in May and June; Frankfurt-Delhi will be upgraded from five weekly services to a daily operation for June; and Munich-Bengaluru will see frequencies climb from five to six flights per week.

"This measure enables Lufthansa and other airlines of the Group to respond flexibly to the changed booking behaviour of travellers, influenced by geopolitical developments," Lufthansa said in a press statement .

Lufthansa subsidiary Swiss International Air Lines has doubled capacity between Delhi and Zurich.

Air Canada, with a daily Toronto-Delhi flight, will add 13 more in April and seven more in May.

British Airways announced a third daily service from Delhi to London from April 7 and a third daily flight from Mumbai to London from May 15.

Key Asian hubs such as Singapore, Hong Kong, and Bangkok too have seen a capacity ramp up, but Lufthansa's most significant capacity addition has been to India.

On further addition of flights from Lufthansa, Senior Director - Regional Sales, South Asia, Kevin Markette, told *The Hindu*, "We are looking at it dynamically to see where to optimise and where we have spare aircraft and rights available to add more flights".

There is, of course, a premium attached to non-stop travel – a Delhi-Frankfurt ticket for travel 25 days out is now priced at about ₹62,000.

"While airfares are driven by demand for these flights, the new flights offer competitive fares for customers looking for better value," Markette said.

That was a reference to Air India, which has added over 100 flights to Europe and North America since February 28, but faces longer routings, with journeys extended by 60 to 90 minutes to Europe and nearly five hours to North America due to a Pakistan airspace ban that applies only to Indian carriers, in addition to the need to avoid Iranian airspace that all airlines are skirting.

These factors present an opportunity for not only European carriers to recapture passenger traffic from India but also for Europe to strengthen its position as a transit hub with industry estimates suggesting nearly 30% Indian travellers connect onward within Europe.

INBRIEF

RBI okays Emirates NBD Bank buying up to 74% RBL stake

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has accorded approval to Dubai-based Emirates NBD Bank to acquire up to a 74% stake in RBL Bank, paving the way for the bank to become a foreign lender. The approval from RBI came on April 1 with one year validity, RBL Bank said. The nod follows Emirates NBD Bank expressing interest in 2025 to buy 60% stake in RBL Bank for ₹26,853 crore. PTI

Jan Vishwas: govt. for minor offence case withdrawal

The Commerce and Industry Ministry wants all the departments to consider withdrawing pending court cases involving minor offences in light of Jan Vishwas amendment bill, as it would significantly reduce load on the judiciary and promote ease of living, a top official said. Parliament on Thursday passed the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2026. PTI

HZL's output of mined metal, refined metal rises in Q4

Vedanta group firm HZL has reported an increase in the production of mined metal and refined metal, but a slight decrease in silver production in the fourth quarter of FY26. HZL's mined metal production increased by 2% to 3,15,000 tonne and its refined metal output rose by 5% to 2,82,000 tonne in the January-March quarter of FY26, according to the company. PTI

West Asia: govt. eyes boost to induction heater output

The Centre held discussions on steps to encourage firms boost output of induction heaters and compatible utensils amid rising demand for the products on concerns over LPG availability following the West Asia crisis, an official said. The crisis disrupted the movement of ships carrying oil and gas via Strait of Hormuz, raising concerns over cooking gas supplies and prompting people to buy induction heaters. PTI

Ship carrying Iranian crude heading to India changes course to China

M. Kalyanaraman
CHENNAI

Ping Shun, a Chinese oil tanker carrying Iranian crude oil, that had crossed the Strait of Hormuz and signalling that it was heading to Vadinar, India, for the past three days is now signalling it was headed for China, according to marine logistics and commodity markets analytics company Kpler.

The vessel, carrying more than one lakh tonne of crude oil, is signalling that it is headed to Dongying in northern China, according to ship tracker websites. As of now, Ping Shun is heading south off the west coast of India.

Sanctioned by U.S.

Ping Shun was sanctioned by the U.S. in February of this month. The sanctions notice says that the ship was involved in Pars crude oil through ship-to-ship transfers with the sanctioned National Iranian Tanker Company with the motive of obfuscating the oil's Iranian origin. The tanker has delivered several shipments to China.

A diversion: Ping Shun is owned and managed by companies located in Shandong, China. AFP (For representation purpose only).

As per shipping database equasis, Ping Shun is owned and managed by companies located in Shandong, China. Shipping sources say that Ping Shun likely switched off automatic identification system (AIS) or was spoofing while crossing the Strait.

This would have been the first time in almost seven years that India would have been buying Iranian oil. The U.S. had, through a "general licence" said that the Iranian oil already loaded as on March 20 would be allowed to be sold and delivered until April 19. But reports suggested Indian customers were reluctant to take in Iranian crude over contractual terms. Sujata Sharma, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas, had said at an official media briefing that purchase of Iranian oil are "all techno-commercial decisions taken by the oil marketing companies".

Iran continues to be locked out of the global financial system due to U.S. sanctions, making payments difficult to process.

Meanwhile, Green Sanvi, a LPG tanker owned by the Indian operations of Mitsui OSK Ltd. and registered in India, was crossing the Strait of Hormuz on April 3. It would be the seventh Indian-flagged LPG carrier crossing the strait and headed to India.

Green Sanvi is carrying more than 46,000 tonne of LPG.

PNB officers' union flags mass Scale IV transfers

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

PNB Officers union has written to the bank's managing director to reconsider the mass-scale transfer of Scale IV officers and above, saying such massive relocation would impact performance of the lender.

In a letter to MD and CEO Ashok Chandra, All India Punjab National Bank Officers' Association said 1,142 Scale IV officers were given transfer orders creating huge disruption.

NATIONAL BOARD OF EXAMINATIONS
IN MEDICAL SCIENCES
(Autonomous body of the M/o. Health & Family Welfare, Govt. of India)
NAMS Building, Medical Enclave, Ansari Nagar,
New Delhi – 110029

NBEMS DIPLOMA FINAL THEORY EXAMINATION – JUNE 2026

NOTICE

National Board of Examinations in Medical Sciences (NBEMS) shall conduct the NBEMS Diploma Final Theory Examinations on **14th, 15th and 16th May 2026.**

The online applications are being invited from **04th (05:00 PM onwards) to 22nd April 2026 (Till 11:55 PM)** at NBEMS website
https://natboard.edu.in/viewnbeexam?exam=diploma

Candidate Care Support: +91-7996165333
- Helpline Portal on applicant login page
- Communication Web Portal on NBEMS Website

राजस्थान सरकार
कार्यालय अधीक्षण अभियन्ता सार्वजनिक निर्माण विभाग वृत अलवर
सा.नि.वि. परिसर, अशोक टाकीज के पास, कचहरी रोड, अलवर
फोन:- 0144-2737038, E-mail:-sealw.pwd@rajasthan.gov.in
कमांक 3933 दिनांक 27.03.2026
अल्पकालिन निविदा सूचना संख्या 27/2025-26
राजकीय अम्बेडकर अनुसुचित जाति बालक छात्रावास, थानागाजी (अलवर) निर्माण कार्य के लिए इच्छुक बोलीदाताओं से 09-04-2026 शाम 6:00 बजे तक बोलियां आमंत्रित की जाती हैं। बोली से संबंधित अन्य विवरण राज्य के पोर्टल (http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in और http://sppp.raj.nic.in) तथा विभागीय वेबसाइट (http://pwd.rajasthan.gov.in) पर देखे जा सकते हैं। कार्य का अनुमानित मूल्य 213.56 लाख रुपये है।
UBN No:- PWD2526WSOB26309
NIB No :- PWD2526A6307 DIPR/C/6336/2026
(नूरी सिंह)
अधीक्षण अभियन्ता
सा.नि.वि. वृत अलवर

UTTARAKHAND CIVIL AVIATION DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
(DEPARTMENT OF CIVIL AVIATION) (GOVERNMENT OF UTTARAKHAND)
SAHASTRADHARA HELIDROME, P.O. KULHAN, DEHRADUN- 248001, UTTARAKHAND
EMAIL: UCADADOON@GMAIL.COM; WEBSITE: WWW.UCADA.IN
Ref.: 4084/UCADA/2026 DATE: 03/04/2026
LIST OF DOCUMENTS REQUIRED FOR REGISTRATION OF HELICOPTER CHARTER OPERATORS & TRAVEL AGENTS FOR UPCOMING YATRA SEASON 2026

SN	DESCRIPTION
1	Registration fee of ₹ 30.00 Lacs in the form of a Bank Guarantee/FDR pledged in favour of CEO, UCADA valid for at least 01 year (existing operators are exempted).
2	A valid NSOP with DGCA for each helicopter model.
3	A current list of qualified pilots along with updated DGCA records.
4	Certificate confirming aircraft maintenance and airworthiness.
5	Proof of wide public dissemination of the anti-corruption toll free helpline number 1064.
6	A signed undertaking confirming that the consortium is operator-led and DGCA compliant.
7	The operator shall not have had any accident in the past two years. An affidavit on Rs 100/- Stamp Paper confirming an accident-free record for the preceding two years, reckoned from the last date of registration, shall be furnished.
8	All Shuttles or Charter operators must undergo DGCA inspection prior to commencement of operation. Undertaking to this effect failing which registration shall be cancelled due to non-compliance
9	All pilots deployed for shuttle operations shall possess a minimum of 750 hours of hill flying experience and at least 1,500 hours of total flying experience, and shall furnish documented safety compliance records for the preceding two years.

Note:
1. Only licensed NSOP holders operating from Sahastradhara & DGCA approved helipads shall be eligible for registration.
2. All documents must be duly attested by the authorized signatory and shall be submitted as hard copy in operations section of UCADA by 10.04.2026 up to 1500 hrs. unless extended by the authority.
3. For any clarification, operators may write to **ucadahoo@gmail.com** and **ops.ucadadoon@gmail.com.**
4. Operators are advised to visit **https://ucada.in** for detailed guidelines of Chardham Charter Helicopter Operations and for any corrigendum.
5. UCADA reserves the right to modify any condition or cancel this registration process.
6. After submission of these documents, UCADA shall provide a 'Unique Registration No.' to each operator & travel agent.
7. 'Unique Registration No.' shall be displayed on UCADA website.
8. Interested operators & Travel agents shall download the final copy of SOP from UCADA's website.

CEO, UCADA

THE HUTTI GOLD MINES COMPANY LIMITED
(A Government of Karnataka Undertaking)
Hutti-584115, Raichur Dist, Karnataka State, Tele: 08537-275463, 276339,
e-Mail: material276339@gmail.com Website: www.huttigold.karnataka.gov.in
TENDER NOTIFICATION No. 39/25-26 Dt: 04.04.2026
(Through KPP Portal only)
Tenders are invited by "The I/c. Dy. General Manager (Materials)" for the following Tenders, detailed below:

Sl. No.	Description	EMD in Rs.
1	Supply of Sodium Cyanide 98 Percent Purity.**HGML/2025-26/IND0448**	14,10,000/-
2	Supply of Sag Mill full set of liners. **HGML/2025-26/IND0423**	9,77,000/-
3	Procurement of Food Kit. **HGML/2025-26/IND0469**	4,13,000/-
4	Design, Engineering, Supply, Erection, Installation & Commissioning, testing of 80 TPH Jaw Crusher in Primary Crushing Plant Including Civil works with connected equipment and other related works. **HGML/2025-26/OW/WORK_INDENT116**	6,16,000/-

Calendar of events: **(1)** Pre-Bid Meetings (Zoom): **18.04.2026 for Sl.No.1 at 10.30 AM, for Sl.No.2 at 11.00 AM, for Sl.No.3 at 11.30 AM and for Sl.No.4 at 12.00 PM. (2)** Last date for receipt of tender: **06.05.2026 at 4.00 PM. (3)** Opening of Technical Bid on: **08.05.2026 at 10.00 AM.** For further details interested bidders are advised to logon to website **https://www.kppp.karnataka.gov.in** or contact the office of undersigned during working hours. For participating in the above tender bidder needs to be registered in KPP Portal.
Sd/- I/c. Dy. General Manager (Materials)
"LEADING GOLD PRODUCER IN INDIA"

Office of the Medical Superintendent
RUHS Hospital of Medical Sciences, Jaipur
Sector-11, Kumbha Marg, Pratap Nagar, Tonk Road, Jaipur -302033(Raj.)
दूरभाष: 0141-2795577, Email: supdt.hms@ruhsraj.org, ruhshmstore@ruhsraj.org
No. :- F. ( ) RUHS HMS/Store/2025-26/16020 Date :- 31/03/2026
Notice Inviting e-Bids
Single Stage Two envelope Online bids (e-bids) are invited upto 02.00 pm of 05-05-2026 for Annual Rate Contract for supply of Non EDL Drugs and Consumable Items at RUHS Hospital of Medical Sciences, Jaipur. (Total Est. Cost Rs. 200.00 Lacs.). Details may be seen in the Bidding Documents at the Website **sppp.raj.nic.in, or eproc.rajasthan.gov.in.**
UBN: CMS2526GLRC00141
Raj.Samwad/C/26/190 **Medical Superintendent**

कार्यालय अतिरिक्त मुख्य अभियन्ता, सा.नि.वि., संभाग द्वितीय उदयपुर मु. बाँसवाड़ा
क्रमांक :- डी - 903 दिनांक :-27.03.2026
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(बी.एल. भेणिया) अतिरिक्त मुख्य अभियंता,
DIPR/C/6338/26 **सा.नि.वि. संभाग द्वितीय उदयपुर, मु. बाँसवाड़ा**

BEIJING

Peace talks between Afghanistan, Pakistan are advancing, says China

AP

Peace talks between Afghanistan's Taliban regime and Pakistan are advancing, China's government said on Friday. "The consultation process is being steadily implemented and advanced," said China's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning. Xi Jinping's government is mediating between Islamabad and Kabul. AP

KYIV

Ukraine says 10 killed in 'massive' Russian missile and drone attacks

AFP

Ukraine on Friday faced nearly 500 Russian missile and drone attacks that killed at least 10 persons, officials said, the latest in an increasing number of daytime strikes by Moscow. President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Kyiv was ready for a truce over the Easter holidays but the Kremlin said it had not received any proposals. AFP

PESHAWAR

Suicide car bomb blast targeting police station kills five in Pakistan

AFP

A suicide car bomb blast targeting a police station in northwest Pakistan killed five persons, including four from the same family, and wounded 13 others late Thursday, police said on Friday. Police said the suicide bomber rammed his explosives-laden vehicle into the rear side of the police station in in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. PTI

UNITED NATIONS

UNSC delays vote on authorising force to protect Strait of Hormuz

REUTERS

The UN Security Council has postponed a vote scheduled for Friday on authorising the use of "defensive" force to protect shipping in the Strait of Hormuz from Iranian attacks, according to the official programme. The 15-member body was set to vote on Friday morning. No new date has been given for voting on the draft. AFP

One rescued after U.S. fighter jet shot down in Iran

This is the first known loss of a U.S. jet inside Iran since Trump ordered the war; Iranian attacks reportedly damage a Kuwaiti oil refinery and a desalination plant, while an intercepted missile causes a gas field fire in the UAE; U.K. deploys counter-drone system to Kuwait as Starmer calls the violence 'reckless'; ex-Iranian Foreign Minister Zarif proposes a deal to end conflict in an American magazine

Associated Press
Agence France-Presse
DUBAI/TEHRAN

A U.S. fighter jet was shot down in Iran on Friday and one crew member was rescued, officials said, the first aircraft downed inside Iran since the war began nearly five weeks ago. It marked a major escalation in the conflict just two days after U.S. President Donald Trump said in a national address that the U.S. has "beaten and completely decimated Iran" and was "going to finish the job, and were going to finish it very fast".

The rescue occurred as the U.S. military was conducting a search operation, a U.S. official and an Israeli official said. Three people familiar also confirmed that a search had been under way. All spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the sensitivity of the situation.

The U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), responsible for military operations in the West Asia, did not respond to requests for comment following what would be the first known loss of a U.S. jet inside Iran since Mr. Trump ordered the war. However, in an email obtained by *AP*, U.S. military says the American aircraft was 'shot down' and White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt said: "The President has been briefed".

Iranian state media said that Iran's military shot down a U.S. F-15E Strike Eagle. The aircraft is a variation of the Air Force fighter jet that carries a two-person crew consisting of a pilot and weapons system officer.

Escalating tensions: Fragments of a downed U.S. jet, believed to be photographed in central Iran on Friday; a view of the B1 bridge, a day after it was destroyed by a strike in Karaj, around 35 km southwest of Tehran, on Friday. REUTERS/AFP

Prior to word of the rescue, a local media broadcast a message from provincial police urging the villagers to join the military in the hunt for the crew of the aircraft that may have gone down in the province.

"Dear and honourable people of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad province, if you capture the enemy pilot or pilots alive and hand them over to the police and military forces, you will receive a valuable reward and bonus," said a reporter on the channel.

Iran fired on targets on Friday across the West Asia, damaging a desalination plant and setting a refinery ablaze in Kuwait, while American and Israeli air strikes hit the Islamic Republic as the war neared the end of its fifth week.

Kuwait's Mina al-Ahmadi oil refinery came under Iranian attack, and the state-run Kuwait Petroleum Corporation said firefighters were working to control several blazes.

Kuwait also said that an Iranian attack caused "material damage" to a desalination plant. Such plants are responsible for most of the drinking water for Gulf states. Sirens also sounded in Bahrain as Saudi Arabia said it had destroyed several Iranian drones, and Israel reported incoming missiles.

Authorities in the United Arab Emirates shut down a gas field after a missile interception reportedly rained debris on it and started a fire. One person was killed and four others wounded in the fire, the government media office said.

Activists reported strikes around Tehran and the central city of Isfahan, but it wasn't immediately clear what was hit. A day earlier, Iran said the U.S. hit a major bridge, which was still under construction, killing eight persons.

'Attacks on health'

The World Health Organisation warned about "multiple attacks on health" in Iran in recent days, while paying tribute to the Pasteur Institute in the capital which was destroyed in an air strike.

Meanwhile, the U.K. deployed a counter-drone system known as Rapid Sentry to Kuwait, as British Prime Minister Keir Starmer condemned a "reckless" overnight drone attack on the Kuwaiti oil refinery.

Former Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif wrote on Friday that the time has come to end the suffering.

"Prolonged hostility will cause a greater loss of precious lives and irreplaceable resources without actually altering the existing stalemate," Mr. Zarif wrote in Foreign Affairs magazine.

Iran "should offer to place limits on its nuclear program and to reopen the Strait of Hormuz in exchange for an end to all sanctions – a deal Washington wouldn't take before but might accept now," he wrote.

American strikes on Iran may amount to war crimes: experts

Reuters
WASHINGTON

Dozens of international law experts in the U.S. have signed an open letter saying that American strikes on Iran may amount to war crimes.

Mr. Trump, who has previously offered shifting timelines and objectives for the war, said in a televised speech on Wednesday that the war could escalate if Iran did not give in to Washington's terms, with strikes on its power and desalination plants possible.

Over 100 international law experts in the U.S., including from schools like Harvard, Yale, Stanford and the University of California, said in the letter released on Thursday that the conduct of U.S. forces and statements by senior U.S. officials "raise serious concerns about violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law, including potential war crimes".

The letter particularly noted a mid-March comment from Mr. Trump where he said the U.S. may conduct strikes on Iran "just for fun". It also cited comments from Pentagon chief Pete Hegseth from early March in which he said the U.S. does not fight with "stupid rules of engagement".

Min Aung Hlaing elected Myanmar President; to be sworn in next week

Agence France-Presse
NAYPYIDAW

Myanmar's pro-military lawmakers elected junta chief Min Aung Hlaing as President on Friday, with the ex-armed forces commander set to maintain his rule in a civilian guise after snatching power by force five years ago.

The coup-leading general ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi in 2021, triggering a civil war that has killed tens of thousands of people. Parliament Speaker Aung Lin Dwe announced Min Aung Hlaing was elected President, chosen by military-aligned MPs installed in a recent election overseen by the junta he leads.

Min Aung Hlaing secured 429 of 584 votes cast in the upper and lower houses of Parliament in the capital Naypyidaw. AP

Min Aung Hlaing secured 429 of 584 votes cast in the upper and lower houses of Parliament in the capital Naypyidaw on Friday, a Parliament official said.

While the junta touted Parliament's reopening last month as a return of power to the people, analysts describe it as civilian window dressing intended to launder the military's continuing rule.

"There is no hope for the country under his presidency. The country will only get worse," said a 50-year-old Yangon resident, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

The pro-military Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) won more than 80% of parliamentary seats contested in the phased poll that concluded in January. Serving members of the armed forces also occupy unelected seats making up a quarter of the total.

Min Aung Hlaing is expected to be sworn in as President next week.

Myanmar's military has ruled the restive Southeast Asian nation for most of its post-independence history and presents itself as the only force guarding it from rupture and ruin.

Hegseth asked U.S. Army chief of staff George to step down

Agence France-Presse
WASHINGTON

Gen. Randy George

U.S. Secretary of War Pete Hegseth has asked General Randy George to step down as chief of staff of the U.S. Army, an official said on Thursday. Gen. George is the latest senior military officer to be ousted during President Donald Trump's second term.

Pentagon spokesperson Sean Parnell later posted a statement on X that said Gen. George "will be retiring from his position... effective immediately," without specifying a reason.

The reason for the request was not immediately known, but *CBS* quoted a source as saying Mr. Hegseth wanted someone who would implement his and Mr. Trump's vision for the Army.

The army's vice chief of staff General Christopher LaNeve will take over as acting chief of staff, *CBS* reported. Mr. Hegseth previously said Gen. LaNeve is "a battle-tested leader".

Beyond enrichment: mapping Iran's potential sprint to a nuclear bomb

NEWS ANALYSIS

Vasudevan Mukunth

Iran is expected to have around 500 kg of uranium enriched to 60%. U-235 is the uranium isotope used in nuclear weapons. Enrichment is the process of increasing the quantity of U-235 in the uranium mass. The rest will be U-238, which is a less efficient fissile material.

A nuclear weapon needs uranium to be enriched to 90%.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has estimated Iran could produce 25 kg for one atom bomb in under 10 days.

Both in June 2025 and in the ongoing war, the U.S. and Israel attacked Natanz and Isfahan – two cities known to host facilities central to Iran's nuclear programme. However, it is not clear how many centrifuges, the devices that enrich uranium, were destroyed. Details of damages to other equipment have also been muddled.

Once uranium is enriched to 90%, the uranium hexafluoride gas used during enrichment needs to be purified and turned into a metal. This is generally expected to take a few weeks, although more modern technologies are known to complete it in six hours. Iran may already possess them; if it doesn't, setting them up could take a few months. Other equipment include a cyclone separator, steel containers, and induction furnaces plus a space the size of a "large closet".

The latter are the words of Theodore Postol, professor emeritus of science, technology, and international security at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), as spoken in an interview on YouTube.

Ideally, personnel handle the uranium through secure gloveboxes, and the facility will have high-grade filters and scrubbers to reduce exposure to toxic substances.

The next step is to weaponise the uranium. While the IAEA has estimated this could take up to two years, Prof. Postol argued that if

Critical site: A satellite image taken last month shows the Natanz Nuclear Facility in Isfahan province, in central Iran. AFP

Iran is ready with the necessary equipment and processes, it could weaponise uranium "within weeks". To this end, again in ideal conditions, skilled personnel will need CNC machine tools, two-axis lathes, vacuum furnaces, and isostatic presses. According to Prof. Postol, these and other requisite operations would be "doable in a tunnel with just a few hundreds of square metres of floor space".

If Iran has enough centrifuges to enrich 25 kg of uranium from 60% to 90% in two weeks, has mastered weaponisation, and has pre-stashed the equipment, it could have a bomb in 3-5 weeks. But if Iran's position is like that of a new nuclear power, it could take more than a year.

Nuclear-capable state

Importantly, as Prof. Postol said, if Israel strikes Iran with a nuclear weapon, there is no difference between whether Iran responds in a matter of months or days. The point is that it's a nuclear-capable state and, given enough time, could wreak nuclear havoc in return.

Iran could also skip further enrichment and use it directly to build a nuclear warhead. It will just take more fissile material: around 40 kg has been shown to suffice for a weapon with a kilotonne yield.

Prof. Postol also said Iran could deliver the bomb without having to test it first if it uses the gun-type design. This comes with a caveat. This design uses a conventional explosive to blow two subcritical masses of uranium together within milliseconds. Once the mass is supercritical, nuclear fission begins and proceeds at an increasing pace.

However, the design is inefficient. According to the International Panel on Fissile Materials (IPFM), around 50-60 kg of 90% enriched uranium is required to achieve a yield of around 20 kilotonnes (kt). Using the more efficient but more complex implosion-type design, where one 'shell' of subcritical uranium collapses on another, for the same yield will require 15-18 kg.

Finally, Iran has to deliver the bomb. Research has found that figuring out how to miniaturise a bomb to fit on a missile could take years. Iran's Shahab-3 missile can carry a payload of up to 1 tonne and travel more than 1,000 km. However, it's not known if Iran has successfully mated a sufficiently small nuclear warhead with the missile.

Another possibility is for Iran to load the bomb on a ship and move it close to enemy territory.

LONG WAIT

CSK breaches the 200-run mark at Chepauk for first time in two years

R. RAGU

Chennai Super Kings breached the 200-run mark at the MAC Stadium in Chennai for the first time in nearly two years. CSK, which recorded 209 for five against Punjab Kings in an IPL 2026 match, last got past 200 on April 28, 2024 – against Sunrisers Hyderabad. It was the sixth time Super Kings scored 200 or more against PBKS.

TIME TO IMPROVE

We have to be better defensively while bowling, admits Fleming

R. RAGU

We have to be better defensively (in terms of bowling) because there is a lot of high-quality batting in the IPL. We have confidence in our bowling attack; in the IPL, every bowling attack is under pressure as the PBKS openers Priyansh and Prabhsimran, *in pic*, showed at the Chepauk on Friday — CSK coach Stephen Fleming.

HONEST TAKE

Spinners having an off-day cost us the match: CSK skipper Ruturaj

R. RAGU

The pitch was better for the pacers, but the slower balls were gripping. We thought that having two wrist-spinners (Noor Ahmad and Rahul Chahar) would help. But both had an off-day, and that is what cost us. We could never really build pressure. Bowling-wise, we have a lot to improve – CSK captain Ruturaj Gaikwad.

PENALTY

Abhishek fined 25% of match fee for breaching IPL Code of Conduct

K.R. DEEPAK

Sunrisers Hyderabad's Abhishek Sharma was fined 25% of his match fee and handed a demerit point for breaching the IPL Code of Conduct during SRH's match against Kolkata Knight Riders in Kolkata. "Abhishek admitted to the Level 1 offence under Article 2.3 and accepted the Match Referee's sanction," said an IPL statement.

Kings ace a big chase, make it two out of two

Priyansh gets the Punjab outfit off to a flyer; his opening partner Prabhsimran, No. 3 Connolly and skipper Shreyas combine to consign Super Kings to a second successive loss

IPL-19

S. Dipak Ragav
CHENNAI

A tall target, the bowlers trying to take control and a tricky asking rate. It is a situation Shreyas Iyer has revelled in quite a few times, both for India and his IPL teams. It requires gumption to go on the offensive while still relying on conventional methods.

The Punjab Kings skipper yet again demonstrated why he was one of the best white-ball batters going around, striking a crucial half-century (50, 29b, 4x4, 3x6) and guiding his side to a five-wicket win over Chennai Super Kings in IPL 2026 at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium here on Friday.

In pursuit of 210, opener Priyansh Arya set the tone with a belligerent 11-ball 39. The left-hander was in equal parts exquisite and marauding. He started by executing an inch-perfect straight drive off Khaleel Ahmed and then lofted Matt Henry over his head for a six. In between, he punished the pacers whenever they erred on the shorter side.

With 83 needed off 48, Shreyas took control and went after the Super Kings spinners in characteristic fashion. He went after Rahul Chahar, producing a fine inside-out lofted drive over covers and pulling a half-tracker over midwicket. Shreyas raced to his half-century off just 26 balls. In the end, the visitors cantered home with eight balls to spare and climbed to the top of the table.

Earlier, Ayush Mhatre had the Chepauk faithful up on their feet as his blistering 73 (43b, 6x4, 5x6) ensured CSK posted 209 for five after being asked to bat.

Fellow Mumbaikars Shivam Dube (45 n.o., 27b, 5x4, 1x6) and Sarfaraz Khan (32, 12b, 6x4, 1x6) provided the momentum towards the end to help their team get past 200 for the first time at home since 2024.

At 101 for one in 10 overs, the host looked set for a huge total. But Yuzvendra Chahal pulled things back through a misery spell (3-0-21-1). Despite Sarfaraz and Dube's efforts, it was evident that the Chennai outfit ended up with less than what it would have wanted and slumped to a sixth straight defeat at its den.

Stealing the show: Youngster Mhatre's 43-ball 73 was the cornerstone of the CSK innings, but Impact Player Priyansh and Shreyas made it a stroll in the park for PBKS. R. RAGU

Next assignment

CSK: April 5 vs. RCB Bengaluru, 7.30 p.m.

PBKS: April 6 vs. KKR Kolkata, 7.30 p.m.

SCOREBOARD

CHENNAI SUPER KINGS
Sanju Samson c Prabhsimran b Bartlett 7 *(7b, 1x4)*, Ruturaj Gaikwad c Wadhera b Chahal 28 *(22b, 2x4)*, Ayush Mhatre c Chahal b Vyshak 73 *(43b, 6x4, 5x6)*, Shivam Dube (not out) 45 *(27b, 5x4, 1x6)*, Kartik Sharma lbw b Jansen 1 *(3b)*, Sarfaraz Khan c Wadhera b Vyshak 32 *(12b, 6x4, 1x6)*, Prashant Veer (not out) 6 *(7b, 1x4)*; Extras (b-1, nb-1, w-15): 17; Total (for five wkts. in 20 overs): 209.

FALL OF WICKETS
1-14 (Samson, 1.6 overs), 2-110 (Ruturaj, 11.1), 3-123 (Mhatre, 12.3), 4-130 (Kartik, 13.4), 5-168 (Sarfaraz, 16.4).

KINGS BOWLING
Arshdeep 4-0-41-0, Bartlett 4-0-48-1, Jansen 4-0-43-1, Vyshak 4-0-38-2, Chahal 3-0-21-1, Stoinis 1-0-17-0.

PUNJAB KINGS
Priyansh Arya **(Impact Player for Chahal)** b Henry 39 *(11b, 3x4, 4x6)*, Prabhsimran Singh run out 43 *(34b, 6x4, 1x6)*, Cooper Connolly c Henry b Kamboj 36 *(22b, 6x4)*, Shreyas Iyer c R. Chahar **(Impact Player for Kartik)** b Kamboj 50 *(29b, 4x4, 3x6)*, Nehal Wadhera c Noor b Henry 10 *(9b, 1x6)*, Shashank Singh (not out) 14 *(6b, 2x4)*, Marcus Stoinis (not out) 9 *(3b, 2x4)*; Extras (lb-1, nb-2, w-6): 9; Total (for five wkts. in 18.4 overs): 210.

FALL OF WICKETS
1-61 (Priyansh, 4.2), 2-95 (Prabhsimran, 8.5), 3-127 (Connolly, 11.5), 4-186 (Shreyas, 16.6), 5-186 (Wadhera, 17.1).

SUPER KINGS BOWLING
Khaleel 3-0-28-0, Henry 4-0-54-2, Kamboj 3.4-0-43-2, Noor 4-0-38-0, R. Chahar 4-0-46-0; **Toss:** Kings; **PoM:** Priyansh. *PBKS won by five wickets with eight balls to spare.*

Rahane hits back at critics, says no issues with strike rate

Y.B. Sarangi
KOLKATA

Kolkata Knight Riders captain Ajinkya Rahane hit back at his critics, saying they were 'jealous' and there were no issues with his strike rate in the Indian Premier League (IPL).

Responding to a query about some experts' views about his role in KKR, Rahane, who has a strike rate of 150 this season (his second best after 172.48 in 2023) so far, said, "I've one of the best strike rates since 2011.

"The people who're talking about me, probably (they're) not watching the matches, or they've certain other targets, they don't like me playing. The amount of success I got, I guess they're jealous of me. I'm happy they're talking about me, negative or positive."

Following KKR's 65-run defeat to Sunrisers Hyderabad while chasing 227 at the Eden Gardens in Kolkata on Thursday night, Rahane reiterated that injuries to key pacers affected his side which lost its first two matches.

"It's still early days, what's important for us is to have that belief in each and every individual."

Rahane praised his bowlers for fighting back after conceding plenty of runs in the PowerPlay. "It looked like they would get 250-260. I thought the bowlers came back really well, bowled smartly. I don't think there was any issue with the pitch.

"First six overs were crucial for us. We lost the extra wicket of Cameron Green. When you're chasing a target, it's bound to happen. What we needed today was partnerships. That didn't happen. SRH executed their plans really well," said Rahane.

Unfazed: Rahane says he is happy people are talking about him, whether negative or positive. K.R. DEEPAK

Off-season training improved my bowling, reckons Nitish

Y.B. Sarangi
KOLKATA

Sunrisers Hyderabad all-rounder Nitish Kumar, who contributed a 24-ball 39 and two wickets in his team's first win of the IPL 2026 against Kolkata Knight Riders at the Eden Gardens in Kolkata on Thursday, said his off-season work improved his bowling.

A week's training

"I wanted to work on my bowling, but it's just the injuries which I went through last year. Thankfully, I got a little bit of time before the season and I did pretty good in one week of training with a specific person.

"That really helped and (it) made sense whatever he said to me," said Nitish, a medium-pacer, without naming his guide.

Nitish said since the pitch was two-paced and the ball gripped for the spinners, SRH brought in Harsh Dubey early resulting in the dismissal of the dangerous Finn Allen.

After SRH lost some wickets quickly, Nitish formed an important 82-run partnership with Heinrich Klaasen and helped their side post 226 for eight.

Nitish said he followed the experienced Klaasen's advice during that partnership.

"Klaasen is such an experienced player, reads the situation well. He has been playing T20s successfully.

Sometimes you just have to listen to a senior who has already been there in that situation... one side (of the ground) was big and one side was small and bowlers were trying to use that.

"We were just saying that bowlers were going to miss the lines and we were going to capitalise on the loose balls," said Nitish.

Sane voice: Nitish said he followed the experienced Klaasen's advice during their crucial partnership. K.R. DEEPAK

> Klaasen is such an experienced player, reads the situation well. He has been playing T20s successfully

No stopping Sindarov; Pragg held to a draw

CANDIDATES CHESS

Sports Bureau

There is no stopping Javokhir Sindarov. After accounting for the second seed Fabiano Caruana in the fourth round, the 20-year-old Uzbek stunned another American when the Candidates chess tournament resumed in Pegeia, Cyprus, on Friday.

Sindarov defeated the top-seeded Hikaru Nakamura with black pieces to retain his sole lead. Remarkably, he has won four of his five games in the tournament so far and has now 4.5 points, one more than Caruana, who bounced back with a victory against Matthias Bluebaum of Germany.

The lone Indian in the fray, R. Praggnanandhaa, who drew with Russia's Andrey Esipenko, is sharing the third place with Dutchman Anish Giri. They are on 2.5 points, with nine rounds remaining.

In the women's section, R. Vaishali suffered her first loss after drawing all her four games. She went down to China's Zhu Jiner. Divya Deshmukh also drew with her Chinese rival Tan Zhongyi.

Sindarov. FIDE

There is a three-way tie at the top in the Women's Candidates. Zhu, Anna Muzychuk (Ukraine) and Kateryna Lhano (Russia) have three points each. Divya and Vaishali are both on two points.

The results (fifth round):
Open: R. Praggnanandhaa 2.5 drew with Andrey Esipenko (Rus) 1.5; Matthias Bluebaum (Ger) 2 lost to Fabiano Caruana (USA) 3.5; Hikaru Nakamura (USA) 1.5 lost to Javokhir Sindarov (Uzb) 4.5; Anish Giri (Ned) 2.5 drew with Wei Yi (Chn) 2.
Women: Aleksandra Goryachkina (Rus) 2.5 drew with Anna Muzychuk (Ukr) 3; Zhu Jiner (Chn) 3 bt R. Vaishali 2; Tan Zhongyi (Chn) 2 drew with Divya Deshmukh 2; Kateryna Lagno (Rus) 3 bt Bibisara Assaubayeva (Kaz) 2.5.

DC, MI keen to show their prowess in afternoon clash

The surface for Saturday's fixture is expected to be full of runs and the visiting team coach Jayawardene sees it as par for the course in the early part of the campaign

IPL-19

Vivek Krishnan
NEW DELHI

In a tournament as long as the Indian Premier League, a franchise's opening fixture isn't necessarily indicative of how the season will transpire. At this early stage, there is plenty of room for lessons to be gleaned, plans to be fine-tuned and combinations to be tweaked.

That said, a win to begin proceedings certainly settles the nerves and spreads positive vibes. Delhi Capitals and Mumbai Indians, which will meet at the Arun Jaitley Stadium here on Saturday afternoon, will attest after victories in their opening fixtures.

While DC overcame a jittery start to a chase of 142 to register a six-wicket win against Lucknow Super Giants, Hardik Pandya's men never looked in strife in pursuit of 221 against Kolkata Knight Riders.

For the five-time champion, a leaner and fitter Rohit Sharma was in full flow against KKR, scoring 78 and stitching together an opening stand of 148 runs with Ryan Rickelton.

All smiles: MI's Suryakumar and DC's Rahul exchange pleasantries during a practice session on Friday. R.V. MOORTHY

With the 38-year-old's involvement at the international level confined to the 50-over format, he was available for the entirety of MI's pre-season preparations this time.

"He joined us on day one of our camp. We did a lot of simulations, we had quite a few practice matches that we played, so he was part of all that. The hand speed was pretty good," said MI coach Mahela Jayawardene on Friday.

In marked contrast to MI's opening pair, DC's top-order appeared shaky at the Ekana Stadium in Lucknow. If Capitals still emerged unscathed, it was owing to Sameer Rizvi and Tristan Stubbs forging a fine alliance from 26 for four.

The surface for Saturday's fixture is expected to be full of runs. Jayawardene sees it as par for the course in the early part of the campaign. "The wickets will get slower as the season progresses. You have to let that natural process happen and not worry too much about the first few games," he said.

Onus on Titans' top-order as it meets Royals in first home tie

S. Prasanna Venkatesan
AHMEDABAD

At some point, every system meets a question it cannot answer. For Gujarat Titans (GT), that question has arrived early this IPL season.

GT designed its 2025 batting around something almost industrial in its efficiency – an absurd average of 121 in the first 10 overs, the highest in IPL history, built on control rather than chaos. Simply put, it was set up for the bulk of its runs to come from its top three – Shubman Gill, Sai Sudharsan, and Jos Buttler – with everything else flowing from that certainty.

The openers were never dismissed together in the PowerPlay. GT lost just 12 wickets in that phase, the fewest of any side, while still scoring at 9.22 runs per over.

That set up the trigger. With wickets in hand, the surge followed – 10 runs per over in the middle overs (7-16), the best, and 11.16 at the death. It wasn't just a template; it was a loop that kept closing on itself. It worked because it didn't need rescuing.

Take away certainty in the middle-order, and a system built on delayed gratification starts to feel like a gamble. With Buttler not quite in his element, the middle-order of Glenn Phillips, Washington Sundar, Shahrukh Khan, and Rahul Tewatia offers promise more than proof.

That is exactly where Rajasthan Royals (RR) will look to strike at the Narendra Modi Stadium on Saturday.

Jofra Archer, with his PowerPlay dominance, and Nandre Burger, with his angle and lift, will look to break the template early. Behind them sits the pace variation of Sandeep Sharma, the control of Ravindra Jadeja, and the deception of Ravi Bishnoi – bowlers who extend pressure.

GT's bowling, quietly efficient in the defeat to Punjab Kings, now meets a different kind of volatility, led by Vaibhav Suryavanshi and Yashasvi Jaiswal. RR began its campaign with a thumping eight-wicket win over Chennai Super Kings.

In its first home fixture, GT's system meets RR's disruption. And one of them is about to look a little less certain than it did a week ago.

Camaraderie: GT skipper Gill and RR batting coach Rathour share a light moment. VIJAY SONEJI

Today's matches

Delhi Capitals vs Mumbai Indians	Gujarat Titans vs Rajasthan Royals
Delhi, 3.30 p.m.	Ahmedabad, 7.30 p.m.
HEAD-TO-HEAD	HEAD-TO-HEAD
Played: 37	Played: 8
DC 16 | MI 21	GT 6 | RR 2
PREVIOUS MEETING	PREVIOUS MEETING
MI won by 59 runs, 2025	RR won by eight wickets, 2025

LIVE ON STAR SPORTS 1 & JIOHOTSTAR

Important to hold onto attacking mindset: Kuldeep

Vivek Krishnan
NEW DELHI

Stripped to its basics, wrist-spin bowling is about deceiving batters with turn, flight and guile. It is a difficult art to execute at the best of times, not least in the T20 format where conditions are eminently favourable to the ones wielding the willow.

Despite the challenges, Kuldeep Yadav has enhanced his reputation in recent years as a left-arm wrist-spinner of high skill. And the 31-year-old, who has been part of two T20 World Cup-winning Indian squads, intends to continue being a wicket-taking weapon in the shortest version.

"It's very important for spinners to hold on to their strengths. Whenever batters put you under pressure, you tend to forget your strength. You look for a safer option to get out of that situation. If you are an attacking spinner, don't let that go. Because that is your identity and if you are doing that work for the team, taking wickets, there can be nothing better than that. Your mindset should be attacking," Kuldeep told reporters on Friday.

Simple plans: Kuldeep says it is very important for the spinners to stick to their strengths. R.V. MOORTHY

Pressed on whether the pitches in T20s should test the skill-set of the batters as well, he said: "There's Test cricket for that, isn't it? It depends on how your bowling is. There are home-and-away conditions. If you play in Delhi, you will get flat tracks. If you play in Lucknow, there's a slightly bigger ground, so there's a bit for the bowlers. If you play in Chennai, it's a bit for the bowlers. In cricket, if everything goes according to you, then you can't become a player."

Rathour terms Suryavanshi a very, very special player

S. Prasanna Venkatesan
AHMEDABAD

Rajasthan Royals' batting coach Vikram Rathour on Friday reiterated his belief in Vaibhav Suryavanshi's exceptional potential, describing the 15-year-old as a "very, very special player" who continues to justify the hype around him.

"He is a very, very special player. That's what I believed last year as well. He has done really well post-IPL last year. He is still looking very good, working hard, and playing some really good cricket," Rathour said on the eve of his team's clash against Gujarat Titans (GT) here.

He also underlined the importance of the current season in Sooryavanshi's development. "It's going to be an important season for him, but his mind is in the right space. He's working really hard."

Addressing how the franchise is managing expectations around the young batter, Rathour emphasised simplicity over needless tinkering. "Having loads of conversations with him. One thing that really stands out is that he is very calm. I know there's a lot of attention on him. He's really not under pressure. He enjoys playing, he enjoys hitting sixes. He loves his batting."

Dashers: Buttler will be eager to get back to his best while Suryavanshi will look to continue his merry ways. VIJAY SONEJI

GT assistant coach Aashish Kapoor backed Jos Buttler to rediscover his best, calling the England star a "top player" who is "on the right path" after a brief lean patch. "It's a matter of one innings," he said, stressing Buttler's pride and hunger to return to form.

He also praised pacer Ashok Sharma as a "terrific talent," highlighting his fearlessness despite being hit on his IPL debut against Punjab Kings. "He wanted the ball at any stage – that's what matters," Kapoor noted.

He added the current XI is "more or less" the ideal combination, with minor tweaks likely if results don't go the team's way.

Uppal confident Indian women have depth to make it to the playoffs

Uthra Ganesan
NEW DELHI

The Indian women's tennis team is hoping to make it to the playoffs of the Billie Jean King Cup for the second year running and captain Vishal Uppal is confident that the team has enough depth to do so.

"Some may think playing at home as pressure, I look at it as an opportunity to show your skills. It's about getting ready physically and mentally and focus on what we have to execute," Uppal told *The Hindu* as the players sweated it out at the DLTA Stadium here on the second day of their preparations on Friday.

Four of the six members of the team – Ankita Raina, Sahaja Yamalapalli, Shrivalli Bhamidipaty and Vaidehee Chaudhari – are the same as last year. Vaishnavi Adkar and Rutuja Bhosale being the new additions as they have come in for Prarthana Thombare and Maaya Rajeshwaran.

Uppal is clear on his girls' preparations. "Hard working, committed and hungry to do something for India," he summed up before elaborating. "The team's shaping up good, everyone's hitting the ball well, we just have to make sure that we can execute the strategies we make.

"Ankita brings in a lot of experience for the team, as does Rutuja, they've been around the block for a while and that really matters. Sahaja's been on the team for a few years now and it's a great opportunity for her to step up and perform to the best of her abilities. Vaishnavi has had a breakthrough year so far. Shrivalli's had a bit of an up and down run but hopefully she'll be healthy and Vaidehi has also done well," he explained.

The BJK Cup comes with its own team dynamics and Uppal admits both the motivation and pressure are very different. "There's a different pressure that comes with representing your country, there are people supporting you, it's more comforting and girls really want emotional support when they're in a tight situation.

"Let's be honest, no one really cares if you're 400 in the world but they do if you play and win for India. Obviously we want to make sure that we have more players at the Grand Slam level. Our ultimate goal is to get to the elite 8-16 but we have a lot of building blocks to get through before that," he said.

The Asia/Oceania Group I competition will be held from April 7-11 with New Zealand, along with Indonesia, expected to be the toughest challenge for the Indians.

LIVE TELECAST

IPL: Star Sports 1 & JioHotstar, 3.30 & 7.30 p.m.

ISL: Sony Sports Ten 2 & FanCode, 5 & 7.30 p.m.

LaLiga: FanCode, 5.30, 7.45, 10 p.m. & 12.30 a.m. (Sunday)

Serie A: DAZN, 6.30, 9.30 p.m. & 12.15 a.m. (Sunday)

Bundesliga: Sony LIV, 7 p.m.; Sony Sports Ten 5 & LIV, 10 p.m.

Getting ready: Sahaja and Ankita during a training session. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

SNAPSHOTS

Gattuso resigns as Italy coach

Italy coach Gennaro Gattuso left his role "by mutual consent" on Friday, three days after the national team failed to qualify for a third straight World Cup. The Italian football federation announced this in a statement thanking Gattuso "for the dedication and passion" during his nine months in charge. "With pain in my heart, not having achieved the goal we had set ourselves, I consider my experience on the national team bench to be over," Gattuso said.

Gattuso. AFP

Indian boxers assured of three medals

Nikhat Zareen (51kg), Preeti Pawar (54kg) and Priya (60kg) won their quarterfinal bouts to ensure three medals for India at the Asian boxing championships in Ulaanbaatar on Friday. Two-time World champion Nikhat outsmarted Philippines' Xian Baguhin with the referee stopping the contest in round one. Another Olympian, Preeti posted a 5-0 victory over local challenger Enkhjargal Munguntsetseg. Priya showcased her composure to upset former World champion and current Worlds bronze medallist Chinese Chengyu Yang 4-1. In the men's 70kg category, Deepak suffered a 1-4 defeat to Jordan's Zeyad Eashash in the quarterfinals.

The results (quarterfinals): **Men: 70kg:** Zeyad Eashash (Jor) bt Deepak 4-1. **Women: 51kg:** Nikhat Zareen bt Xian Baguhin (Phi) RSC 1st round. **54kg:** Preeti Pawar bt Enkhjargal Munguntsetseg (Mgl) 5-0. **60kg:** Priya bt Chengyu Yang (Chn) 4-1.

Bangladesh pips India in shootout, wins title

Bangladesh edged out India 4-3 in a dramatic penalty shootout to win the 2026 SAFF under-20 championship in Male, Maldives, on Friday. It was goalless at regulation time. The shootout began poorly for India, with Rishi Singh's attempt saved by Ismail Hossain Mahim. Samuel Raksam's miss, which struck the crossbar, briefly kept India in contention, but Omang Dodum fired wide. Ronan Sullivan converted a cheeky Panenka to secure Bangladesh's second SAFF under-20 title.

Punjab FC rallies to beat Mohammedan SC

Punjab FC came from behind to beat Mohammedan SC 2-1 in the Indian Super League in New Delhi on Friday. With its third win, PFC rose to fourth while Mohammedan remained at the bottom without a point after six matches.

The result: Punjab FC 2 (Nsungusi Jr. Effiong 47, Dani Ramirez 52) bt Mohammedan SC 1 (Lalremsanga Fanai 29).

Northern Waves is poised for a hat-trick in the Brave Dancer Plate

HYDERABAD: The four-year-old filly Northern Waves, who has won two races during this season, is poised for a hat-trick in the Brave Dancer Plate, the main event of Saturday's (Apr. 4) races.

1 CYNDY PLATE (1,800m) Maiden, 4-y-o and upward, rated 20 to 45 (Cat. III), 2.55 p.m.: 1. Mysore Pharoah (7) Kuldeep Sr. 60, 2. Yuvraj (4) Mukesh K 57.5, 3. Desert Flower (1) Gaurav 56, 4. Beech Wood (2) Kuldeep Jr. 55, 5. Golden Aura (3) B. Nikhil 55, 6. Photograph (6) G. Naresh 55 and 7. Screenshot (5) Santosh Raj 55.
1. MYSORE PHAROAH, 2. YUVRAJ, 3. PHOTOGRAPH

2 GALACTICA PLATE (1,200m), 4-y-o and upward, rated 20 to 45 (Cat. III), 3.20: 1. Arthisha (1) Mukesh K 60, 2. Cypress (7) Trevor 54.5, 3. Analysis (4) G. Naresh 54, 4. Dhanadeepa (3) D.S. Deora 54, 5. Noorian (8) Kuldeep Sr. 54, 6. Quality Warrior (13) Md. Ismail 53.5, 7. Nkalanzinzi (5) Ashad Asbar 53, 8. Moonlite Rose (9) Surya Prakash 51.5, 9. Opera Queen (12) Ajay K 51.5, 10. Star Councillor (11) Gaurav 51.5, 11. Farsiris (6) P. Sai K 51, 12. Kitsune (2) Md. Ekram 51, 13. Most Beautiful (10) Kuldeep Jr. 51 and 14. Pranava (14) B. Nikhil 51.
1. CYPRESS, 2. ARTHISHA, 3. MOST BEAUTIFUL

3 GRACE HANOVER PLATE (Div. I) (1,200m), 4-y-o and upward, rated 40 to 65 (Cat. II), 3.45: 1. N R I Triple Power (3) Mukesh K 60, 2. Miss Smiley Angel (7) Ashad Asbar 56.5, 3. Sharanga (10) Trevor 55, 4. Calabasas (9) Ajay K 54.5, 5. Rolls Royce (6) Md. Ekram 53.5, 6. Petra Act (8) D.S. Deora 52.5, 7. Shooting Star (2) Neeraj 52, 8. Emperors Charm (5) Kuldeep Sr. 51.5, 9. Juramento (1) Surya Prakash 50.5 and 10. Only The Brave (4) P. Sai K 50.5.
1. SHARANGA, 2. N R I TRIPLE POWER, 3. SHOOTING STAR

4 SOLITAIRE PLATE (1,400m), 5-y-o and upward, rated 40 to 65 (Cat. II), 4.15: 1. Bholi Punjaban (10) Mohit 62, 2. Gloria (7) P. Ajeeth K 62, 3. Rival (5) Ajay K 60.5, 4. Federer (2) Gaurav 59, 5. N R I Range (9) P. Sai K 58, 6. Blue Pantheress (6) Neeraj 57, 7. Clefairy (14) Trevor 57, 8. Catchme If You Can (8) Mukesh K 56, 9. Top In Class (1) Md. Ismail 55, 10. Hoping Star (12) B. Nikhil 54, 11. Miss Marvellous (13) G. Naresh 53.5, 12. Bold Beauty (11) Santosh Raj 53, 13. First Lady (3) B.R. Kumar 53 and 14. Una Paloma Blanca (4) Surya Prakash 50.
1. BLUE PANTHERESS, 2. CLEFAIRY, 3. N R I RANGE

5 WINDSCALE PLATE (1,600m), (Terms) Maiden, 3-y-o only (Cat. II), 4.45: 1. Ashwa Vivegam (4) Gaurav 56, 2. Excalibur (7) P. Ajeeth K 56, 3. Garfunkle (3) Trevor 56, 4. Toshiro (6) Mukesh K 56, 5. You Tuber (2) Md. Ekram 56, 6. Ashwa Jaffna (5) B. Nikhil 54.5, 7. Northern Sky (1) Ashad Asbar 54.5 and 8. Ruby Tuesday (8) Mohit 54.5.
1. TOSHIRO, 2. EXCALIBUR, 3. NORTHERN SKY

6 BRAVE DANCER PLATE (1,200m), 4-y-o and upward, rated 80 and above (Cat. I), 5.15: 1. Hugh Capet (7) Kuldeep Jr. 60.5, 2. Black Onyx (6) D.S. Deora 59, 3. One N Only (5) Mukesh K 59, 4. Lashka (12) P. Ajeeth K 57, 5. Miss Maya (4) Neeraj 56.5, 6. Vivaldo (8) Trevor 56.5, 7. Diablo (10) Ashad Asbar 56, 8. Reigning Beauty (11) Md. Ismail 54, 9. Celestial (1) Gaurav 51.5, 10. Northern Waves (9) Ajay K 51, 11. Shadow Of The Moon (3) P. Sai K 51 and 12. Silver Act (2) B. Nikhil 50.
1. NORTHERN WAVES, 2. DIABLO, 3. VIVALDO

7 GRACE HANOVER PLATE (Div. II) (1,200m), 4-y-o and upward, rated 40 to 65 (Cat. II), 5.45: 1. Emerald Touch (8) Ashad Asbar 60, 2. Dontblockmyway (2) P. Sai K 58.5, 3. Ayushman (4) Mukesh K 57.5, 4. Crimson Flame (6) Mohit 57.5, 5. Zuza (10) P. Ajeeth K 56, 6. Greif (9) Neeraj 55, 7. Home Run (5) Kuldeep Sr. 54.5, 8. Mix The Magic (7) D.S. Deora 54, 9. Lazarus (1) Surya Prakash 53.5 and 10. Normui (3) B. Nikhil 53.
1. GREIF, 2. EMERALD TOUCH, 3. AYUSHMAN

8 NEXT MOVE PLATE (1,200m), 4-y-o and upward, rated upto 25 (Cat. III), 6.15: 1. American Affair (8) P. Ajeeth K 61, 2. Live Legend (12) Ajay K 61, 3. Politics (7) G. Naresh 61, 4. Don Cherie (5) Md. Ekram 60.5, 5. Char Ek Char (1) Mohit 60, 6. Deccan Ranger (9) Mukesh K 60, 7. Muaser (10) Gaurav 59, 8. Star Cruise (2) Surya Prakash 59, 9. Always Special (4) Kuldeep Jr. 57.5, 10. Amboseli (3) Uday Kiran 57, 11. Niloufer The Great (6) Md. Ismail 51.5 and 12. Blue Brigade (11) P. Sai K 50.
1. DECCAN RANGER, 2. MUASER, 3. LIVE LEGEND

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COVER

Offices learn from hotels

Design, amenities and service culture transform professional spaces

GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

Sijo Jose

The idea of what an office should be is undergoing a quiet but decisive change. No longer defined by rows of desks and secluded cabins, offices are increasingly being reimagined as spaces that prioritise experience, comfort and human interaction, borrowing heavily from the world of hospitality.

According to JLL's 2025 Experience Matters research, nearly two-thirds of people globally now expect the spaces where they live, work and spend time to offer enjoyment, variety and meaningful value. That expectation is fast reshaping how companies think about office design, especially in India, where the concept of 'hotelification' is gaining traction. This trend reflects a broader rethinking of the workplace: not as a fixed piece of infrastructure but as a service. Employers are recognising that the physical environment plays a critical role in influencing how people feel, collaborate and perform. As a result, offices are beginning to resemble boutique hotels or high-end lounges, where aesthetics and functionality are equally important.

As early adopters of hospitality-led design, flexible workspace operators have long focused on creating environments that combine functionality with experience – offering everything from thoughtfully designed common areas and community programming to concierge-like services and premium amenities. In many ways, coworking spaces have served as live prototypes for what the modern office could become, influencing even large enterprises to rethink their own workplaces. Their emphasis on flexibility, community and service has set new benchmarks, pushing the broader office market towards more human-centric, experience-driven design.

Behind this shift lies a growing body of evidence linking employee experience to business outcomes. Research by McKinsey & Company suggests that improving employee wellbeing could unlock as much as $11.7 trillion in global economic value. Meanwhile, a study by Gallup found that organisations with highly engaged employees report 41% lower absenteeism, 17% higher productivity, and 21% higher profitability.

Beyond desk

For companies, the message is increasingly difficult to ignore: investing in employee experience is not just a cultural decision. It is

a financial one. In a competitive talent market, the workplace itself has become a differentiator, shaping recruitment, retention and even brand perception.

This growing focus on employee experience is also reflected in the introduction of thoughtful workplace amenities and engagement initiatives. Beyond infrastructure, there is a stronger push towards community and wellbeing through curated programs like Zumba sessions, and lifestyle and health-related initiatives that encourage a more balanced work routine. At the same time, safety remains a priority, with regular fire and safety mock drills being conducted to ensure preparedness and build a secure work environment.

This is where the influence of the hospitality sector becomes particularly relevant. Hotels have long mastered the art of designing spaces around human needs, focusing on seamless experiences, from intuitive layouts and quick connectivity to personalised services. Offices are now borrowing these principles, incorporating features such as concierge-style services, flexible seating and curated food options. The goal is not to blur the line between work and leisure, but to remove friction from the workday. When employees can move easily between focused work, collaboration and relaxation, productivity tends to follow naturally. The office, in this sense, becomes less about presence and more about purpose.

In India, where office attendance is steadily normalising, companies are responding by redesigning spaces to make them more inviting and meaningful. The emphasis is on creating environments that support both individual performance and collective culture.

Ultimately, the hotelification of offices signals a deeper shift in how work itself is understood.

Employee wellbeing and experience are no longer peripheral concerns or discretionary spending items. They are central to how organisations compete and grow. In the modern workplace, the office is no longer just a place to work, it is a space designed to make work better.

The writer is co-founder and director, property acquisition at SpazeOne.

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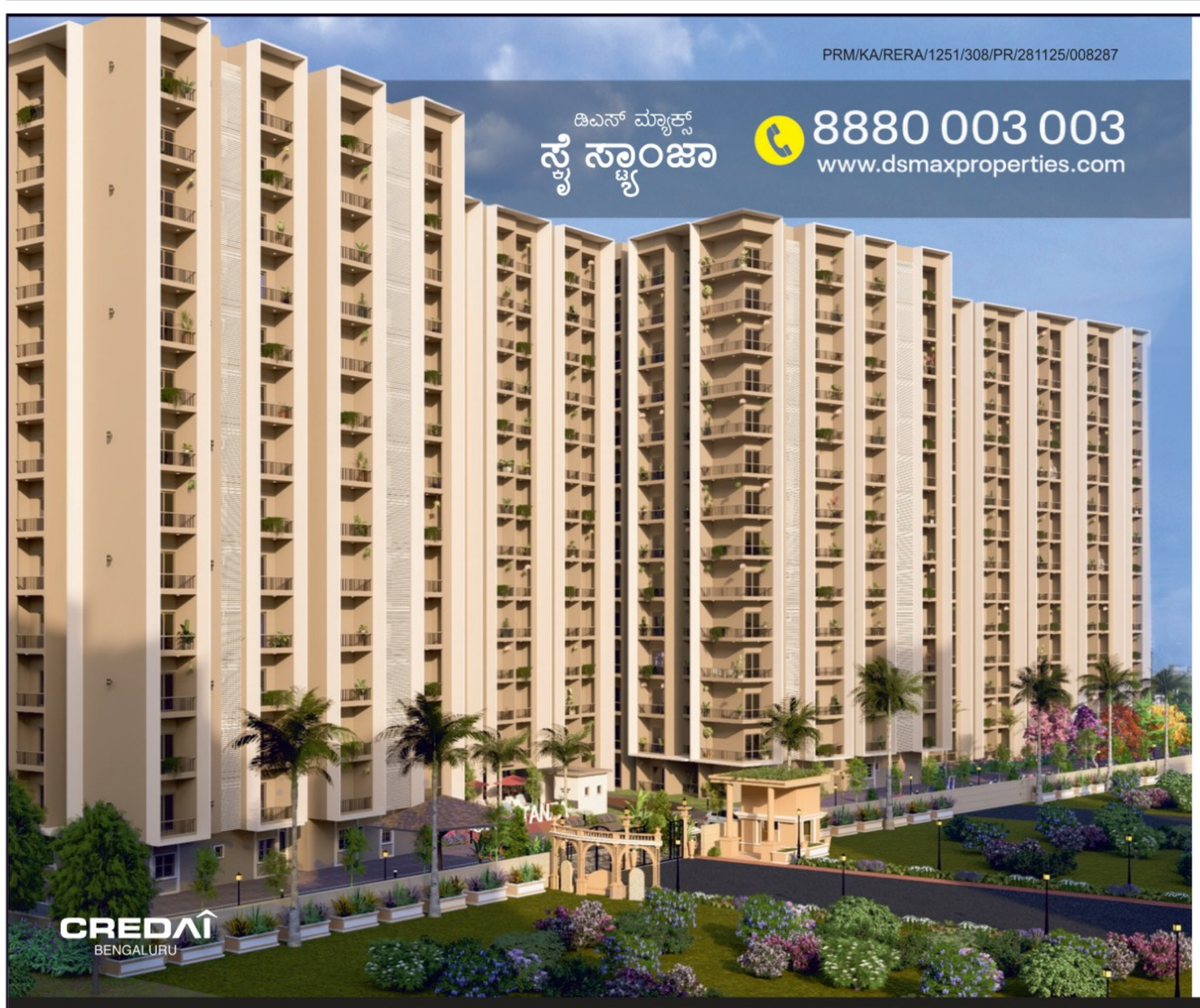

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BG-BGE

Serie A title race heats up as Italy mourns WC fiasco

League leader Inter clashes with Champions League chaser Roma on Sunday; contenders Milan and Napoli meet in a big game the following day while Como locks horns with Udinese

Agence France-Presse
MILAN

Big boost: Inter's star striker Martinez, back after an injury layoff, should start against Roma. FILE PHOTO

Napoli and AC Milan will face off on Monday with Serie A leader Inter Milan in their sights, but the return of domestic football over Easter has been completely overshadowed by the fallout from Italy failing to reach yet another World Cup.

Leading Milan by six points with eight matches remaining in the season, Inter would ordinarily be confident of claiming a 21st league crown ahead of the visit of Champions League chaser Roma on Sunday.

But Napoli and Milan have reignited what had looked to be a dead title race, helped by Inter picking up just two points in its last three matches before a traumatic international break for Italian football fans.

No Lukaku

Napoli is a point behind Milan after having won its last four matches following the end of a near season-long injury crisis, but will be without Romelu Lukaku after the Belgium striker incurred the wrath of the reigning champion for staying in his home country for treatment on a hip problem.

But that row, and the title battle all fade into the background when faced with the national team's latest humiliation, failing to reach a third straight World Cup.

The reaction to Tuesday's play-off defeat on penalties to Bosnia and Hercegovina has been the same to the previous two that cost Italy a place at the world's biggest football tournament: rip it up and start again.

Football federation chief Gabriele Gravina was the first to fall on his sword, his resignation coming on Thursday afternoon, two days after saying he would wait a week before making a decision.

He was followed by the national team's general manager Gianluigi Buffon, with coach Gennaro Gattuso also stepping down.

Now the talk is of how to bring Italian football back to the top table after years of flops from the national team and the slow decline of the country's top clubs on the European stage.

Inter was the one club that had stayed with the best on the continent but even it has helped contribute to the doom, gloom and despondency after being dumped out of the Champions League by Norwegian minnow Bodo/Glimt. Cristian Chivu's team has also become a sort of symbol of Italy's failure, with defender Alessandro Bastoni being sent off in the first half against Bosnia and academy product Pio Esposito smashing over the first penalty in the shootout.

Roma will be hoping to lift a depression of its own by staying in the hunt for a top-four finish.

Knocked out of the Europa League by Bologna and wobbling in Serie A, Roma has an awful record against the division's top teams and trails fourth-placed Como by just three points. But with Como at Udinese on a run of five straight wins Gian Piero Gasperini's Roma, sixth and level on 54 points with Juventus, risk falling further off the pace.

Inter's recent wobble coincided with Lautaro Martinez's injury absence but the Argentina striker should start at the San Siro on Sunday night.

Martinez has not played since Inter's home humbling at the hands of Bodo.

The 28-year-old leads the Serie A scoring charts with 14 goals and Inter will be hoping that he can stay fit in the final weeks.

ROUND-UP

Dharwad posts win over Bagalkote

Dharwad District HA beat Bagalkote Jilla HA 7-3 in the KSHA B-division hockey league championship on Friday. In another encounter, Bangalore Friends HC beat Southern Alpha SA 5-1.

Hockey Karnataka trials

Hockey Karnataka will conduct trials on April 10 at the hockey stadium here (9.30 a.m. onwards) to select the State team for the 16th Hockey India Junior Women National Championship scheduled to be held in Pune from April 29 to May 10. Those born on or after January 1, 2007, are eligible.

MNK Rao Park boys enter final

MNK Rao Park BC beat PPC 81-65 to enter the boys' final of the State junior basketball championship on Friday.

The results: Boys: HBR BC 70 (Rishith 19, Siddhartha 16) bt Viveks SC 61 (Anshul 23); MNK Rao Park BC 81 (Aakash 24, Vijayeendra 19) bt PPC 65 (Ryan Joseph 22, Adithya 19).
Girls: DYES Vidyanagar 76 (Ishitha 30, Deepika 16) bt Mandya Dist 34 (Manasa 16); B'lore Vanguards 73 (Mahek Sharma 21, Pranjal 14) bt Viveks SC 53 (Jeyashree 15, Linisha 15).

RR Nagar blanks Gandhinagar

RR Nagar thrashed Gandhinagar 5-0 to enter the quarterfinals of the KSFA-Vaishnavi Chief Minister Cup football tournament here on Friday. In the day's other match, Shivaji Nagar and BTM Layout played out a 3-3 draw but the former entered the last eight by virtue of having a better goal difference.

Unbeaten FC Goa faces a tough BFC test

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FC Goa will look to extend its unbeaten run in the Indian Super League when it hosts Bengaluru FC at the Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium here on Saturday.

After three successive draws, the Gaurs return home eager to capitalise on familiar conditions. The last time the sides met at this venue, Goa handed Bengaluru FC its first defeat of the season.

This time, Manolo Marquez's men enter the contest as one of two unbeaten teams – Mumbai City FC being the other – this season.

Solid defence

Goa's solid defence has been the highlight of its campaign and it is one of two outfits – along with Mohun Bagan – to have conceded only three goals so far.

However, it faces a stern test against a Bengaluru FC side riding a three-match winning streak.

Ryan Williams, fresh from his exploits for India, and Ashique Kuruniyan pose attacking threats.

The Goan defence, marshalled by Sandesh Jhingan and Pol Moreno, with support from Aakash Sangwan and Boris Singh Thangjam, has proved difficult to break down.

While Goa has shown resilience by coming from behind and securing draws, the Dejan Drazic-led attack needs to be sharper against a Bengaluru defence that has let in just five goals in six games.

For BFC, a victory would lift it to the top of the table and mark an ideal start for head coach Pep Munoz, who took charge after Renedy Singh's departure.

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